

Hannah Crawford Manchester
S E R M O N S,
AND *Nov 1832*
EXHORTATIONS
FOR
THE WHOLE YEAR,
ON THE
SACRED MYSTERIES AND MOST IMPORTANT
TRUTHS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY THE LATE
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Beati qui audiunt Verbum Dei, & custodiunt illud.
Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.
St. LUKE, xi. 28.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.
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S E R M O N S

ON

VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

S E R M O N I.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW.

What is written in the Law?—Do this and thou shalt live.

Luke, ch. 10, v. 26 & 28.

ALMIGHTY God, as supreme master of his gifts, could absolutely have promised and granted eternal happiness to mankind in general, without any condition or stipulation whatever. But this he was not pleased to do. On the contrary he has ordained that eternal happiness should be the reward of our fidelity. *Heaven is a crown of justice*, according to St. Paul; a crown bestowed as a reward for our works of justice upon earth, and a crown never granted but to such as deserve it. Whoever therefore aspires to eternal happiness, must consider it in this light, and be perfectly convinced within himself, that he never will be made partaker of everlasting felicity unless he shall deserve it. How deserve it?—By fulfilling the law of God. This is the agreement that God has been pleased to make with mankind in the person of Jesus Christ, for he says in the Gospel, *what is written in*

VOL. II.

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the law? — Do this and thou shalt live: or attain to life everlasting. Although Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind, had an undoubted right to enact new laws relating to salvation, yet he was content with enforcing the laws already established, and chiefly contained in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, extending them to a larger compass, and raising them to a higher degree of perfection; because these laws were fully sufficient to obtain the end of their institution, namely, the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind. Now these laws as they stand enforced anew, extended to a larger compass and raised to a higher degree of perfection by Jesus Christ the divine master and legislator of mankind, are comprised in the Gospel, and the observation of these laws, is what Jesus Christ declares to be a necessary condition towards obtaining life everlasting. The observation of the law of God being then the groundwork of our salvation, the knowledge of this law becomes the first duty of every christian. All knowledge before this melts into air. The proud philosophy of the ancients, and the deep researches of the wise ones of old, what have they tended to? At most only to gratify idle speculation in examining the laws of nature, and drawing often wrong conclusions from false principles: but the laws of moral piety and moral rectitude were set aside, unless built upon their own systems; and thus those laws which alone should form the true study of man; those laws which comprehend every thing sublime, every thing awful, every thing terrible to man; those laws, the observation of which raises man beyond every thing in the visible creation, were made to give way to vanity or interest. The desire of appearing, rather than of being wise, smothered the seeds of wisdom and truth, which in a greater or lesser degree Almighty God has planted in the heart of every human creature. Far removed from you let this reproach be, my brethren, who certainly lie under greater obligations to the goodness of
Heaven

Heaven than those philosophers of old, for the many blessings you enjoy which they did not, in being born and reared and instructed in the bosom of the Church of Christ, and the way shewn to you which leads to Heaven, by obeying the laws. But in proportion as those advantages are great, so will your guilt become greater, unless by faithfully observing the law you fulfil the duties it prescribes, and thereby manifest how far superior the simple wisdom of a christian is, beyond all the boasted wisdom of proud, prophane, and worldly knowledge. Jesus Christ has laid down laws for the government of your lives, and enforces them by rewards and punishments. As there is no exemption in this case, I repeat it, it becomes the first duty of a Christian to know them; because a knowledge of the law is a necessary condition for observing the law. This subject, therefore, naturally branches out into two distinct points, to the consideration of which, I solicit your attention.—First, an inviolable attachment to the law; and—secondly, a faithful compliance therewith.

First. That attachment to the law which the law requires, is not barely confined to the study of its principles, but to the performance of its obligations. Many there are who study the law from a spirit of vanity, and a desire of manifesting to the world how much they are conversant with the deepest mysteries and the strictest obligations of religion. Others are eternally discoursing of the law, extolling its perfections, and recommending unto others the practice thereof, with the greatest, and in appearance, the sincerest zeal imaginable: but then their actions are always at variance with their words, and their conduct quite the reverse of their outward principles. In this particular they are like the pharisees, whom our Saviour frequently reproaches in the Gospel, with speaking a great deal of the law and performing little or nothing of what they said. Some are seen to shew the greatest conformity with the law, and put on a most impos-

ing mask of austerity : but this they do from a spirit of hypocrisy, which under a holy and sanctified appearance frequently conceals the greatest iniquity and dissoluteness. People of this character are what St. Paul calls *painted sepulchres*; white and shining outside, but within corruption and putrefaction. The man who is truly virtuous, has the law of God not in his thoughts alone, or in his words, not in his air or appearance, but where King David carried it, as the Holy Ghost declares, *in his heart*. In the heart of a virtuous man the law resides ; there it rules. From the heart, as from its center, it spreads and extends its influence to all the faculties of the soul, so as to regulate all her thoughts and desires, all her actions and affections. What the soul is to the body—the vivifying principle; the same is the law of God to every virtuous man. It is this divine law that animates and governs his whole conduct; advises him in doubt, directs him in deliberation, enlightens him in action, and even sanctifies his rest. Neither the allurements of riches, the attraction of pleasures, the shew of grandeur, nor the opinions or prejudices of men have the least influence over him. The study of men in general is bent upon acquiring new lights, gratifying curiosity, or collecting information if possible upon every thing interesting to this life. But the great study of the law of God and the observation of its precepts, whereon not only life eternal but death eternal depend, is and should be the first and chief study of all rational beings, especially of those who possess so much knowledge upon all other affairs. Some study to raise a great name by rank, honours, illustrious actions, or by composing and publishing works of science. This empty name even during life, what doth it add to a man of sense? At the last period of life what consolation doth it afford? And in future ages should your name be mentioned with admiration for the depth of your understanding, or the brilliancy of your actions, what will it avail
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should you be cast off by God for your inobservation of his holy laws? The knowledge of every thing that reason can comprehend, without the knowledge of the law of God, is smoke. Should you be able to count the stars and see into the reasons which moved the eternal mind of God, by one word to create them so numerous, so various, so differently placed, and for what ends, still this knowledge without the knowledge of the law of God, would be truly vain. On the other hand a knowledge of the law of God is true wisdom, although unaccompanied by any other wisdom. The law of God to a virtuous man, becomes a monitor, friend, and companion. The only thing he consults upon every occasion is that law which is deeply imprinted in his heart. When the law commands and calls aloud for the performance of some material and important duty, he immediately obeys and breaks forth into action: when the law forbids and checks his pursuits, he immediately desists. When the law barely points out the danger, he walks with the utmost caution, *neither declining to the right nor to the left*, as the Royal Prophet says, but following steadily the heavenly light that shines within him, his docile mind pursues the easy and direct way which the law points out to eternal happiness.

Such are the fruits of an attachment to the law of God which the virtuous man possesses. Without such attachment, men governed by their own reason are apt to judge of all things by their reason; to presume on their own lights and the solidity of their judgment; to form judgments from their private opinions, and resolutions from their intentions. Almighty God the hidden light of every mind, and the secret mover of every heart, they neither consult nor think of, nor pray to, relying upon themselves and the knowledge they possess. Error therefore naturally creeps in, and passion domineers. The law of God not only instructs but corrects; not only enlightens reason,

but breaks down passion or concupiscence. A sincere attachment to this law clearly shews how much we love God, and God on his part will not fail to love us. *Happy is the Man*, says the Holy Ghost, *that could do evil, and did not do it; that could transgress, and transgressed not.* But what is this happy conduct owing to? To an inward attachment, or obedience to the law; to an attachment or obedience which is lodged in, and strongly impressed on the soul: This attachment to the law should be common to us all, because it is the very first of our obligations, an obligation so great, that we should be always disposed to sacrifice our dearest interests, our fortunes, and our lives, rather than transgress any one essential point of the law. I will go farther and say with all divines in ancient or modern times, that our attachment to the law ought to operate so far as to induce us to make the foregoing sacrifices, rather than transgress the smallest point of the law: for our blessed Saviour says in the Gospel, *if any one love his father or mother, his brother or sister, nay his very life before me*, (that is before the fidelity, submission, and attachment due to his laws) *he is not worthy to be called my disciple.* Therefore an inward, sincere and inviolable attachment to the law of God, is the very first step to virtue, the very first qualification which renders us worthy the name and appellation of Christians: so that wherever that attachment and fidelity to the law are wanting, there can be no virtue, no Christianity, no religion. But where is this inward, sincere, and inviolable attachment to the law of God to be met with? Among the Christians of our days? No; nothing is so rare. False philosophy, false principles, false ideas, supersede the law of God, and most people think and act from the false impulse of these false principles, whereby that war is constantly maintained, which we daily behold between truth and false opinions. Amidst this general wreck of sound reason, there are a few, but few they are, who regulate

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regulate their actions by the law of God: I say but few, because what the generality of the Christians of our days enquire into, is not whether a thing be lawful or unlawful; whether it be conformable or repugnant to the laws of God; but whether it be suitable to their interest, or any way conducive to the encrease of their credit or fortune in the world. This is the principle that rules in their hearts, and breathes throughout all their actions; and this must appear plain to any man who considers their conduct. For can any thing be more common than to see numbers of people daily supporting their credit or increasing their fortunes by means directly contrary to the law of God? The only thing they will make some difficulty to commit, is a flagrant injustice, or some notorious act of dishonesty. It is not the magnitude of the crime, but the publicity that deters them. If the world is blind to their wickedness, they make no account that the eyes of God are open on them. The laws of men are cautiously and cunningly eluded, but the laws of God are quite overlooked. If the laws of men are publicly respected, the laws of God are privately despised. Now should a Minister of the Gospel have zeal and resolution enough to let them know that there are a great many points of the law they daily transgress, the violation of which makes them obnoxious to the justice of God, and will certainly exclude them forever, if they do not repent, from the kingdom of Heaven. They only laugh at the wholesome information. From their behaviour, one should really imagine the law was not made for them; but that they had a particular exemption from the law. But there can be no such thing, because the law is universal. It comprehends all Christians as one great family, without distinction of high or low, rich or poor, wise or ignorant, elevated or humble. All ranks, all states, all conditions are subject to the law: for as Almighty God is the supreme master of the whole creation, 'tis clear he had a right

to extend his uncontrollable power to what limits, and exert it in what manner he thought proper. In the order of nature he has connected all bodies by a certain combination of parts, and annexed certain laws to each, so has he done with regard to the rational and intellectual part of the creation, by laying down certain laws for their conduct, the observation of which he requires under the severest penalties. This appears from the old and new law. In the old law we find that Almighty God, after conversing many days with Moses upon Mount Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning, and such dreadful appearances as visibly bespoke the presence of the Divinity, manifested at length his awful will, and engraved his commands on tables of stone, which commands were by his orders published to the whole people of Israel. It appears more fully in the new law, as we read in St. Matthew, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon the point of commissioning his Apostles to go and preach the Gospel throughout the world, addressed them in the following words; *go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and order them to observe and fulfil whatever I commanded you.* Hence it follows, that the law was to extend to, and bind all those who in future times should be made acquainted with the all-saving name of Christ. Under the pale of the Moisaic law the Jews alone as the chosen people of God were comprehended; and by Jews I mean in the first instance, the posterity of Abraham, and in the second, those Gentiles who became converted to the Jewish religion, and incorporated with the body. But the more perfect law of Jesus Christ widely stretching out its arms over all nations and countries, all tribes and people, comprehends all, invites all, shelters all, regulates all. It regulates them by offering grace (without which the law could not be executed) to enable all men to discharge the duties prescribed by the law. By grace, or that supernatural

tural aid which comes from God alone, we not only are enabled to discover our duties laid down in the law, but to discharge those duties as the law requires. Moreover, it would not be consistent with the goodness of the Almighty to lay down a law for mankind, without annexing to the observance, or non-observance of that law, such rewards and punishments as were proportioned to the infinite dignity and unbounded goodness of the Almighty God.

Further, Almighty God has not only laid down certain laws for us to observe, in consequence of his supreme and uncontrollable power over all the creation, but has likewise made the observance of those laws the only title to the kingdom of Heaven. You have the words of Jesus Christ for it, *if thou hast a mind to enter into life* (meaning eternal life) *keep the commandments*: observe the law; that is your title to the realms above. Such was the answer given by Christ to the Doctor of the law, one of the Sanhedrim, or chief Council of the Jews, who standing up, interrogated our Saviour what he should do to obtain life everlasting? Our Saviour answering, said unto him, *what is written in the law? and what readest thou in it?—Do this, and thou shalt live.* Unless you observe the law you shall not live, because the observance of the law is the only means of obtaining life eternal; the only title to the kingdom of Heaven. Stop a while, my brethren, and consider with me whether or not this great and fundamental principle of religion—the observance of the law, be the prevailing principle in the actions, the governing principle in the conduct of modern Christians. This reflection is far from gratifying either you or me. Modern Christians are fashionable Christians; that means, people, who, conforming to custom, acknowledge and believe in God, but no farther. All ceremonies and sacraments to them are mummery. “Nature made man Lord of the creation, free like air, and gave him senses to be indulged, not repressed.” Such is

the philosophy of modern Christians. And to this philosophy (if I may apply so fine a word to so foul a subject) are owing all the evils of this life, and all the miseries of the next. For thus modern Christians would fain go to Heaven, not by fulfilling the law, but by transgressing it; not by incidental transgression, but by deliberate and systematic violation, and defiance of all law and power. As I hope that none of you, my brethren, are fashionable Christians in the sense I have touched upon; as I hope such black iniquity is not applicable to any one of you, I shall spare you and myself the trouble of combating and reproving it; but you should know that so soon as the stamp of Christianity is affixed on us by baptism, from that moment forward, to the last moment of life, we are bound by the laws of God, and obliged under pain of reprobation to fulfill the whole law. Thus a soldier who enters the service of his Prince, is bound to obey and conform to such military laws, as are, or have been enacted, however severe or difficult in the execution. But the laws of men differ from the laws of God in this; that the laws of men are often severe in their object, difficult in execution, and wrong in principle. Were I disposed to illustrate this argument by point proof, the history of my own country would afford me ample field, provided I may call that country my own where I am ignored by the laws, although the soil gave me birth: but such discussion ill becomes a minister of a crucified God, to preach whom and his holy laws for the instruction and government of your lives, is his only duty, and to shew that whilst the laws of man are sometimes hard and difficult, the laws of God are never so: and in this all true servants of Christ agree, as Jesus Christ has said, *my yoke is sweet and my burthen light.*

Although you join me most heartily in condemning fashionable Christians, still I beseech you turn your thoughts from those whom the follies and allurements of life draw away from the observance
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of the law of God, to the manner you fulfill the law, who are not withdrawn by such temptations. Can it be true, and still deplorably true it is, that you who profess yourselves servants of the Lord, and look up to his holy residence, you who daily venerate in our tabernacles the great eternal God, who made you and shall judge you—you who manifest a Christian-like docility in favouring me this day with your attendance, should still offend and insult the most high God, more than the heathen. The heathen knows not the Lord God, nor his holy law. You do, and still you disobey his law. You curse and swear; blasphemy, detraction, lying, drunkenness, and debauchery, are your familiar exercises. Some comply occasionally with the law, like time-servers, but never fail to transgress it when their interest or their fortune are at stake. And yet such people expect to be saved. How without fulfilling the law? Lord God, how great is this error! Are you still ignorant that salvation can never be obtained, but by a faithful compliance with the law? This is the covenant made between God and Moses on behalf of the people: This the covenant that Jesus Christ has made with all his disciples, the condition upon which Heaven alone can be obtained, and the promises of God fulfilled under the new law. Without a faithful observance of the law all other acts of religion will never bring you to life everlasting. Although you should fast and pray, and give alms; although you should fill his temple with oblations, cover his altars with gifts, and pass away whole days in prayer, all these will not avail to obtain the end that every human being should have in view—the glory of Heaven, unless you be sincerely and effectually disposed to fulfill the law, and the whole law upon every occasion, let the loss or danger to yourself be what it may. It follows then, that as the number are few who are thus sincerely attached to the law, few are they who will be saved. I acknowledge it: but the perdition of the great bulk even of Christians

Christians is not owing to the law, for the law is plain, practicable, and even easy in the execution, not to Almighty God (for he offers us abundant grace to fulfill the law, and even incites us by the grandest promises—Heaven, and deters us from disobedience by the severest penalties—pain and punishments both eternal,) but to the perverseness of our will and conduct, in refusing submission to the law, or informing ourselves of what it enjoins and forbids. Stop your career this day in the broad road that leads to death, and as holy David did, place *the law of God in the midst of your hearts*. Convince yourselves that you never will be saved unless you are sincerely attached to the law, so as to make it the rule of your whole conduct. This alone is serving Almighty God *in spirit*, as St. Paul directs: this alone is paying Jesus Christ the true adoration he requires from all his followers, this in a word is attaining that true justice, so very different from the false justice of the pharisees, which the Almighty demands at our hands, as the indispensable, the only title to the kingdom of Heaven. This salutary justice consists, as I have shewn you, in an inviolable attachment to the law, which forms the foundation for that regular compliance with the law, whereon the beautiful structure of a Christian life appears, which I bound myself concisely and plainly to shew you in the sequel.

2. It is not enough to have an inviolable attachment to the law, the injunctions it contains must likewise be fulfilled in the order and manner prescribed by the law. For the better understanding of this, you must know the law contains various observances of different kinds; some more material than others. The material observances are called by Divines, the precepts of the law; those less material, counsels, or points of perfection. Now in order to fulfill the law properly and regularly, we should always begin with the precepts or points of indispensable obligation. For this is the rule our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
lays

lays down in the Gospel, when he says, *these things* (meaning the precepts or material points) *you ought to do, and not leave the others undone*; from whence it clearly follows, that our first care should be to discharge every essential obligation, before we would think of points of greater perfection. To do otherwise would be running counter to the directions of the eternal wisdom of God, and consequently mistaking a shadowy and glaring appearance for the substance and reality of virtue; it being impossible that any thing can be virtuous or good which does not square with the rules and maxims of Jesus Christ. Although the precepts of the law must always take precedence of the counsels; although the counsels of the law never can be deemed virtuous, unless preceded by the precepts, or built upon the accomplishment of the essential points of the law; still this is one of the most prevailing disorders in the world. I appeal to your own experience, how often do we behold persons occupied in the more perfect observances, at the very time they utterly neglect the most material obligations of the law? We shall see this great and general abuse of common reason more clearly by a few examples. This citizen is extremely hospitable, kind to strangers, generous to his acquaintances, and even benevolent to the poor: but then he never thinks of paying his just debts, either to the merchant who supplied him with goods, or to the friend who advanced his money to relieve him in distress, or to the servant, or workman, who spent many long laborious days in his ungrateful service. People of this description are not uncommon in the world: but let them know the works of justice should go before hospitality, generosity, or charity. Charity in this case loses its claim to virtue: to make it a virtuous act, it must not trample upon, but be supported and borne up by justice. Strict justice is seen in all the dealings of that fair female, whose religious disposition, and pious conduct, daily edifies the church.

church. Long and pensive prayer, sublime and heavenly contemplation begin and close each day. But as the Holy Ghost says in the Revelations, *I have a word or two* for her. Her flippant tongue detracts and slanders; her lips occupied every morning and evening in praising the holy name of God, invoking his mercies, and deprecating his justice, are seen in every company running down her acquaintance or neighbours with keen invective, or bitter gall. That mercy she daily calls for, she daily refuses to her absent inoffending neighbour, whose failings are magnified, whose intentions blackened, and even virtuous actions besmeared by the keen poison of her venomous tongue. But know, fair traducer, full of false piety, that the law of God requires charity towards your neighbour before all things, before this mock piety and pretended godliness, which insults, not honours, provokes, not appeases the Majesty of Heaven. That charity is required by the law, which spares and protects character, veils over failings, praises good intention, and honours virtuous actions. In others indeed is seen an exemption from this blemish. A foul mouth forms no part of their character. Nakedness, hunger, and sickness, exhibit the monuments of their well known charities. The people where they live find always in them able guardians of property, kind protectors of fame; religion also finds in them warm advocates, zealous for the glory of God, and the advancement of virtue: but still religion weeps over their failings—they never forgive an injury. Offend them in any degree and you are sure ever to find them bitter enemies. As in Heathen Rome, the Vestal Virgins always kept a lighted fire in their temple, so those Christians by name, keep kindled in their hearts the unhallowed fire of abominable resentment, which growing strong by time, bursts forth and dies away in the offender's ruin. To treasure up resentment for a convenient opportunity, is one of those acts most degrading to human nature. With
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such people the law of God is but a sound without a name. If any one in this assembly harbours resentment, malice, anger, or hatred, let him uproot it and cast it off, as a serpent in the bosom, or fire in the hand; otherwise the mercies of the Lord can never alight on such people: for you are bound by the law, before charity or zeal, to shew mercy, clemency, and forgiveness. Once more allow me to call your attention to another description of Christians very fond of certain austerities and devotions of their own devising. Their exalted virtue disdains walking in the common road, the beaten track with the rest of the faithful; nor can they relish any practice of piety which may be known unto and observed by the croud. Like the unhappy Gentoos who inhabit the eastern countries of Asia, they form to themselves fantastical ideas of honouring the Divinity. Utterly averse to that plain, easy, regular, but unaffected deportment, which is the true character of unfeigned Godliness, and was so very discernible in Jesus Christ himself, they always aim at something extraordinary and out of the common road. Every thing of this kind they are strictly observant of; but they make no difficulty to omit the acts of self-denial commanded by the church, in certain seasons sacred to penance and humiliation; nor will they condescend to join with the faithful in the solemn and public worship, which is paid in our holy temples on stated days unto the Lord. But let such people know, if any such there be here, that what the law requires before all things; before their pretended illustrations, and imaginary perfection, is obedience: because the Holy Ghost says, by the voice of the prophet Samuel, *obedience is better than sacrifice*. Let them consider well the ponderous words of St. Paul, *the Angel of darkness sometimes transforms himself into an Angel of light, to seduce and lead astray all vain, aspiring, and presumptuous minds, into the most pernicious errors and shameful illusions*.

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This is certainly the case with a great many who pass for pious and godly souls in the opinion of the undiscerning croud; but are quite otherwise before the all-discerning eyes of God, inasmuch as they neglect amidst all their apparent Godliness, the most material points of the law: the very points they should always begin with conformably to the orders of Jesus Christ. The evils I complain of, this false virtue which is but a mask for the blackest crimes, are not confined to our days alone. Except in the primitive church (where also we find an infamous Simon) the evil has existed in every age and in every country. St. Austin complains bitterly that this evil was common among the faithful in Africa in his days. He knew many who thought nothing of getting drunk, and running into other criminal excesses, but were most scrupulously exact in wearing a white garment during the first eight days after their baptism. This is the foliage not the fruit, the shadow not the substance, the name not the spirit of our holy religion. Here is not that virtue, that full observance of the law which Jesus Christ requires at our hands, as the only title to the kingdom of Heaven. No: it is no more or less than a pharisaic virtue: a virtue reprov'd by Jesus Christ, and declared by him to be insufficient for obtaining life everlasting. This is the virtue our Saviour lashes so severely in the Gospel. Here are his words, they abound in deep instruction: listen to them. *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, you hypocrites; you scrupulously pay the tythe of mint, and anise and cummin, (these are minute and insignificant herbs) but then you have left the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith undone. These you ought to do, and not leave those undone.* Would to God the same evil existed no longer! but the contrary is too well known, not only with regard to the general, but likewise the particular obligations of the law.

Besides the general duties prescribed by the law, which are common to all Christians, such as justice, piety,

piety, and mercy; there are other essential obligations peculiar to the different conditions of life. A General of an army, a Governor of a city, an Administrator of the laws, or of property; Legislators, and men in power, have all duties to fulfill different from those in private stations. The virtues of a single life, and those of the wedded state, are not of the same kind. A husband and wife, a master and servant, a parent and child, have each particular relations to each other, which they are bound by the law reciprocally to fulfill, so that if a man should neglect these particular engagements he is bound to by the law, equally as to the general engagements I have spoken of, he can never be deemed a virtuous and upright man, let his adherence be what it may to those general precepts. For true virtue and uprightness consists not in fulfilling a part, but all justice; and fulfilling all justice comprehends, it is plain, the performance of every duty. Besides as Almighty God instituted the different conditions of life, for the support of the moral union and harmony he intended should subsist between them, it is manifest he must require from every individual a steady concurrence towards that end, which can never be obtained but by a punctual discharge of the relative duties peculiar to each respective rank. It then becomes the bounden duty of every Christian, to examine and search within his own breast, how far he discharges the duties peculiar to his state of life; and to convince himself he never will enter the kingdom of God, should he prove deficient in this material point of the law. Let every parent consider he is obliged by the law, not only to make a proper provision for his offspring, in those things that relate as well to food and raiment, as to settlement in life; but likewise to educate them in the love and fear of God; inciting them continually to virtue by word, but chiefly by example; and frequently inculcating on their tender minds the great principles of religion; the love, respect, and fidelity

lity due to the Almighty God, the great and noble rewards that are promised unto those who love and serve him; and the dreadful punishments decreed against all such as transgress his holy laws. Let every master likewise consider, that he is bound by the law, not only to pay honestly his servants, and all those who derive under him, but also to prevent their offending Almighty God before his eyes, as far as his influence can extend conformable to the rules of discretion; he is further bound to inspect into their conduct, as far as lies in his power, and see that they discharge their Christian duties. Men in power should likewise consider, that in their public characters they are the representatives of Heaven; and consequently bound by the law, not to *make use of weights and weights, measures and measures*: that is, not to act with the least degree of partiality; but do justice to every man without favour or affection. Thus, and thus alone, you fulfill the law, by fulfilling it in the order and manner prescribed by the law. But instead of observing the law in this Christian-like manner, the great bulk of people scarcely ever think of the particular obligations they necessarily lie under from their different states. Hence it follows, that the law remains unfulfilled, and they become liable to the justice of God, and the everlasting punishments he has decreed against all the guilty transgressors of the law.

From what has been said, we are all bound to draw some just inference for the future government of our lives; for this sermon will rise up in judgment against you unless you derive some advantage therefrom. The spirit of God directs you in making this inference; *fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the business of every man*. The great and important business for which we all came into life, was truly to fear God, to love him and keep his commandments, and observe his holy laws. To observe his holy laws is in one word the whole duty of man. But how far have we discharged
this

this duty hitherto? Who, or where is he that can say, as that virtuous youth mentioned in the Gospel said unto our Saviour himself, that he had kept the commandments from his very infancy? In this particular we must all be silent. Instead of assuring Jesus Christ that we observed his laws from our infancy, very few of us can scarcely assure him, that any one day passes over without some remarkable transgression, some gross violation of the Divine law. The more unhappy we are by our frequent transgressions, the more necessary it is to call this day on the Lord for mercy, to deplore our past transgressions of the law in the bitterness of our hearts; to entreat forgiveness, and to ground this application on a firm, lasting, solid resolution, to fulfill the law faithfully to the last period of our lives. Almighty God commands you to act in this manner; and he offers you his all-powerful assistance in the performance of these salutary purposes. His mighty hand he stretches out in aid of feeble nature. He invites, he calls, he longs to see his strayed sheep return. All the endearments of love he uses for your conversion, for he is the God of love; but beware how you slight them this day, lest you might feel him *the roaring Lion of Israel*. Eternal happiness he promises to all those who fulfill the law; at the same time he denounces eternal misery, eternal pain, against all those who refuse fulfilling the law, and obeying its precepts. Remember, and let it sink deep into your minds; remember it is a God who promises; a God who threatens. What God promises he certainly will fulfill, he must fulfill; because he is essentially true to his word; essentially true to his glory and honour. What God threatens must also necessarily come to pass; because his justice is supported by inconceivable power; and this justice can never be appeased, the time of mercy being once expired. The term for mercy is this life. To you or me this life may end this year, or perhaps this week. These are
awful

awful motives for conversion. Is it possible to exhibit stronger incitements, than Heaven on one side with all its joys, and Hell on the other with all its torments? The one confers all that is desirable; the other entails all that is dreadful. The one is the glorious reward of all those who observe and fulfill the law; the other, the terrible punishment of all its guilty transgressors. *Keep therefore the law, and the law will keep you*; the Holy Spirit says so; but how?—It will protect you from the anger of God in the last day, the day of wrath; it will save you from the lake of fire and brimstone; and put you in possession of the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

O N C O N F E S S I O N.

Go, shew yourselves to the Priests: and it came to pass, that as they went they were cleansed.

St. Luke, ch. xvii. v. 14.

NOTHING could be easier for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, than to grant without limitation or restriction, the prayer of the ten Lepers, mentioned in the Gospel whence I have taken my text, who earnestly intreated his pity and compassion. Yet it appears, that instead of granting their request, as he usually did on the first application, he was pleased to send them to the Priests, whose function it was under the Mosaic law, to judge of those that had been cured of the leprosy, that they might after such cure, be incorporated with the people and restored to all the privileges and occupations of social life. Jesus Christ would not cure them, until they had set forward towards the place where directed, *as they went they were cured.* Whence proceeds a conduct so singular, so unusual in our Lord? As every action of his life had some great object in view, this surely was intended to prepare the way for the acknowledgment of that power in his Ministers, whereby we are cured of a much more dangerous disease than the leprosy of the body, I mean the leprosy of the Soul by sin. That judiciary power vested in and exercised by the Levites in the old Law, was but a figure of that power which Christ Jesus has vested in his Church and delegated to her pastors, to examine the maladies of the Soul, and cure them. The Priests
of

of the new law, St. Chrysoftom says, in his third book upon the Priesthood, have not only a power of judging of the cure, as in the old dispensation, but likewise of curing the very soul from all the disorders of sin. This power they exercise in the tribunal of penance, where on the part of God they daily grant the forgiveness of sins to such as present themselves after due preparation, with the necessary dispositions of conscience. The sacrament of penance or confession instituted by Jesus Christ and productive of such wonderful benefits to the world, as to raise sinful man to grace and friendship with his maker, is by a licentious depravity rejected as a meer machine of human invention, whilst many are unacquainted with its virtue and excellence: some neglect, others abuse it. Yes, Lord Jesus! thy enemies now, as the Scribes and Pharisees of old, spurn at thy favours and abuse thy choicest blessings. They confess thee Lord it is true, but not their sins; and false principles supersede thy holy, infallible, unerring maxims. The humiliations of confession are shocking to them but let them; be so no longer O Lord! for they are thy creatures, the image of your likeness. Give them docile hearts and thy servant instructive words in pointing out confession as the only road that leads from the death of sin, to the life of grace. Come then, my Brethren, and attend me in exploring the great blessings that follow a good, and the great evils that follow a bad confession—a sacrament conferring life on the one hand and death on the other.

In the first place you shall see, that the sacrament of confession is in itself a fruitful source of sanctification; and in the second, that by our own faults, we often make it the cause of our own condemnation.

1st. All the Sacraments in general were instituted for and do greatly contribute to our sanctification; but not all alike. Some do not confer spiritual life, but only serve to augment and preserve it. Others do

do confer it, and likewise contribute greatly to preserve it. Now confession or the Sacrament of penance is of this kind. It is the means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin and likewise a powerful preservative against it. Hence it follows that confession must be in itself a most particular source of sanctification.

That confession is the means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin, appears from the powers our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave unto his Apostles, as laid down in the Gospel, *receive ye the holy Ghost, whosesoever's sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them, and whosesoever's sins ye retain, they shall be retained.* It cannot be denied from these words, that the Apostles had a power of remitting and retaining sins. Nor can it be denied, that this power so conferred has been transmitted by the Apostles to their successors in the ministry: otherwise Almighty God would have dealt less merciful by one part of the faithful than the rest, by depriving these of the most powerful means of Salvation. This power of remitting or retaining sin, which was conferred on the Apostles, and is still subsisting in their successors, could not, nor cannot be exercised but by confession. For be pleased to observe, that the Apostles in virtue of the power they had received from Jesus Christ, were authorised not only to remit, but also to retain: Now, in order to discharge their ministry properly, it was necessary for them to know when to remit and when to retain: and this they could never know but by means of confession. For by confession alone could they be informed of the secret dispositions of sinners, the multiplicity and heinousness of their sins and the sincerity of their repentance; whence it follows again, that as the power of remitting sins could not be exercised but by means of confession, confession must be a means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin. The Apostles being men, although endowed with rare gifts, still not knowing the state of a sinner by intuitive knowledge, they must be at a
loss

loss when to forgive or retain sin, except by the confession or declaration of the sinner; and hence confession became an obligation or duty upon all mankind, as all mankind are sinners. The obligation of confession is anterior to Christianity. Among the ordinances laid down for the people of God, as recorded in the book of Numbers, it is specially ordered, not by Moses the great Legislator, nor by any of the Prophets, but by the spirit of God himself, *when a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and offended, they shall confess their sin.* Confession then became the ordinary means that Almighty God had established for the recovery of his Grace, after it had been lost by sin: but what had been only a precept in the old, was raised to the dignity of a Sacrament in the new Law. We find by St. Mathew how zealous the primitive Christians were in *confessing their sins* after being baptized by St. John in the Jordan; and that zeal which distinguished them in all their religious actions I wish most earnestly to propose for your imitation. The Apostle St James addressing the faithful, charges them *to confess their sins to one another.* To whom is this confession to be made? To the faithful in general? or to any in particular who have no power or authority in spirituals? By no means; the very supposition of such an idea carries absurdity on the face of it. To whom then is confession to be made? undoubtedly to the ministers of Christ, who received in their ordination from the successors of the Apostles, the power of remitting and retaining sin, in the very same words in which Jesus Christ addressed his Apostles, *receive ye the Holy-Ghost; whosesoever's sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whosesoever's sins ye retain, they shall be retained.* To the ministers of God alone confession is to be made, as they alone possess the power of remitting sin;

sin; and, that forgiveness follows from confession thus made (the necessary dispositions of the heart always supposed) is further supported by the 1st Epistle of St. John, *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all iniquity.* From the authority of the holy Scriptures, respecting the institution of confession and the means afforded thereby to the faithful to obtain forgiveness of sins, it appears to me unnecessary to recur to any other. For your edification I shall just touch upon the constant and universal practice of Christians in every age to confess their sins to the ministers of Christ.

When the light of faith was spreading over the Eastern parts of Europe by the labours of St. Paul, it is related in the Acts of the Apostles, that at Ephesus, a considerable city among the Grecian states, all the people of that city, both Jews and Gentiles, being struck with fear at the miracles performed by the power of God, and *many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds.* Confession then became a necessary consequence of conversion from sin, as at present. The Fathers of the Church speak eloquent and forcible, of the benefits and necessity of confession. The profound Tertullian, who lived in the second century, says, "Confession is made at the foot of a Priest, that the eternal punishments due to sin may be effaced by this temporal humiliation and suffering." St. Cyprian, who lived in the third age, assures us, "the faithful confessed their sins and thereby discharged their souls of the heavy load of their iniquities." St. Chrysostom, who flourished in the fourth century, in establishing the necessity of Confession, addresses one of his own flock in the following manner: "Do not say I repent in my heart: I tell you (continues the holy Father) that is not enough: you must besides open your mouth and declare your sins to the minister of Christ, otherwise Jesus Christ could have had no meaning in giving unto the
 VOL. II. C "Church

“ Church the keys of the kingdom of Heaven ;
 “ nor in saying to his Apostles, *receive ye the holy*
 “ *Ghost ; whosesoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted*
 “ *unto them ; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they shall*
 “ *be retained.*” St. Augustin, who after shining
 as a bright luminary for a considerable time in
 the fourth century, continued his labours for
 about thirty years in the fifth, expressly says in
 his 49th homily, that “ to pretend it is sufficient
 “ to confess to God alone, is to destroy the
 “ commission of Christ, to contradict the Gospel,
 “ and to make void the power of the keys ; because
 “ the keys of the kingdom of Heaven which were
 “ given to the Church would be useless, and the
 “ power of retaining sins would be void, if such
 “ sins as exclude from the kingdom of Heaven
 “ could be readily remitted independently of the
 “ keys given to the Pastors of the Church.”
 Hence it appears clearly that sacramental con-
 fession as prescribed by the church, has since the
 primitive ages of Christianity been always con-
 sidered as a Divine institution, established by Jesus
 Christ, enforced by the holy Fathers and Doctors
 of venerable antiquity, and constantly practised
 by the faithful as a necessary means to obtain
 pardon of the sins committed after Baptism.

The necessity existing now that then existed, the
 obligation necessarily exists also. What the fathers
 then taught and preached, we now teach and
 preach ; what they urged, we now urge ; what
 they declared, we also declare, that confession
 (when confession can be made) is the only avenue
 that leads a sinner to the grace and friendship of
 God. Notwithstanding these strong, demonstra-
 tive proofs some may ask, if it may be not a les-
 sening to the supreme power of Almighty God,
 to have recourse for the remission of sin, to any
 other but God himself ? This question could only
 arise where the principles of religion are weak.
 The minister in absolving sin at confession, acts in
 the name and by the power of God. It is God
 alone

alone that forgives, that absolves by the ministry of the Priest. To have recourse therefore, to the means that Jesus Christ has been pleased to appoint for the remission of sin, can be no lessening to the supreme power of Almighty God. The Sacraments in general, which are visible signs, were instituted to confer on man, the invisible blessings of grace and forgiveness. Nor was it ever considered that Baptism, which was instituted by Christ as a remedy for the remission of original sin, is any way injurious to the Divinity.

These are the solid grounds whereon the Church of Christ hath always established the belief of this fundamental point of our religion. Let it be your pride to believe, and by partaking often of the Sacrament, reap all the benefits intended to flow from Confession. Let others boast the pretended advantage of lying under no restraint with regard to their consciences, and of accounting for their sins to none but the Almighty God: it is our particular blessing—our inestimable felicity to have a sacrament, which produces infallibly the remission of sins: for Jesus Christ has said so (and what mortal shall presume to contradict him?) *whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them.* Since the fall of Adam, fallibility, imperfection and sin are the sure lot of Man. They necessarily flow from a depraved nature, corrupt passions, and the power of our spiritual enemies: when those fall who deny confession (and who is he that falls not daily?) what certainty have they of forgiveness after grievously offending Almighty God? They repent in their hearts, they say, and they may think so. But supposing the God of Heaven to require more; suppose he requires that not only they repent, but likewise declare their sins to the ministers of Christ, who have been vested with a power of remitting sin, and they refuse to comply with the condition, what hopes can there be of forgiveness in a supposition of this kind? These pleasing and comfortable hopes are and must be derived from

the Sacrament of confession or penance, which Jesus Christ hath instituted not only as a means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins, but likewise as a wholesome and powerful preservative against sin.

To comprehend this rightly, you must know, the sacraments have a double effect. The first consists in conferring or encreasing the sanctifying grace of the soul, which makes us agreeable to God, and gives us an undoubted title to the kingdom of Heaven: this grace is called by Divines habitual or sanctifying grace. The second effect consists in conferring actual and particular graces, adapted to the end and institution of the sacrament we receive. For Almighty God having intended the different Sacraments for different ends, as appears plainly from their number, whereas one single Sacrament might have been enough for the sanctification of mankind, had they not been destined for several and various purposes, these Sacraments must necessarily be attended with such graces as are suitable and conducive to their respective ends. Hence it is the peculiar end of the Sacrament of penance, to heal the soul of the deformity and spiritual death caused by sin, and to infuse new life and the full vigour of spiritual health. It follows moreover that this Sacrament must be productive of the graces necessary to preserve the spiritual life and health acquired thereby: so that a man who confesses properly, not only receives the full forgiveness of his sins, but is likewise entitled in virtue of the Sacrament to additional graces and assistances, by which he is enabled to preserve the justice and righteousness he acquired in the Sacrament. On this account Confession has always been looked upon by St. Bruno, Bellarmin, and all the masters of a spiritual life, as the most effectual remedy for curing the weakness of the soul, up-rooting evil habits, restraining and subjecting the senses to the maxims of the Gospel, and forming Man solidly in the habits

habits of virtue and justice. Besides, all the circumstances attending confession have a strong and immediate connection with the preservation of spiritual life in the grace of God. For let me ask what greater curb can there be to our vicious inclinations, to our depraved appetites, irregular passions, or the unhappy propensity to vice we are born with; than to know that in confession we must declare all our sins, our hidden sins, our most shameful sins? the sins of omission as well as commission; of counsel, command, bad advice or evil example; the sins of thought, as well as of words or deeds; the sins that insult the dignity of God by infringing any command, as well as those that injure our neighbour or ourselves; those sins in fine we would wish to conceal from mortal eye and from ourselves also if possible, all must be laid open in confession before reconciliation or forgiveness can be obtained from almighty God. The recollection of this circumstance—the awful, candid, full and clear declaration of sin to the minister of Christ in confession, has alone operated so forcibly, as to stop many from sin at the very brink of temptation.

I cannot dismiss the consideration of the great blessings that flow from the Sacrament of penance, without noticing the many great and heroick virtues which accompany the performance of confession: the humiliation of the mind, the compunction of the heart, the hatred of sin, the reformation of the Soul, and a commencement of a true and supreme love for the Almighty God. These are the previous and necessary dispositions required for confession; which dispositions are extremely capable in their own nature of supporting our natural weakness, and guarding us against the commission of sin: So that confession, whether considered in itself, or in its attendant circumstances, is a most powerful preservative against sin. It cures, it heals, it renovates the soul, which by sin had been deprived of the friendship of God and

the fellowship of the Saints. As in the old law, the miraculous pool of Jerusalem possessed the virtue of restoring sick persons to health by immersion, so in the church of Christ have we a mystical pool, which hath the virtue not only of restoring the soul to, but likewise of preserving it in the full vigour of spiritual life. Should not our thanks therefore be unbounded to the Almighty and good God, for having graciously granted so necessary—so powerful—so divine a remedy to his Church? How melancholy would our condition have been, were we deprived of the inexpressible advantages that arise from confession? Should we not make it our business each day to praise and magnify his holy name for so great and inestimable a gift? Should we not likewise shew our gratitude, by partaking frequently of the blessings that may be derived from this rich, fruitful and inexhausted source of divine grace? It happens, however, most unfortunately indeed, that Confession which in itself is a fruitful source of sanctification, becomes often by our own faults the cause of our condemnation, as will appear by what follows of this discourse.

II. As in the order of nature, things of the greatest excellence prove most destructive when abused, so do they likewise in the order of grace. Confession which in itself is productive of the greatest blessings, may become by our own fault the occasion of the most heinous transgressions: for, this divine remedy with all its virtue and efficacy will not—cannot operate without certain previous and attendant conditions, the want of which deprives it of all its virtue, and even turns it into a deadly poison. These conditions are, *Contrition* or a true sorrow and compunction for having offended Almighty God; a full *declaration* of sins to the minister of Christ, which according to St. Austin, is a real judgment wherein the sinner acts the part of a witness and judge; of a witness, by deposing against himself, and of a judge

judge by condemning himself to all the humiliations and severities of penance or *satisfaction*. Now these are the very things, people are generally deficient in—because they have not (commonly) true sorrow and compunction for the sins they are guilty of, and, because they commonly make themselves less guilty than they are.

The first essential requisite for confession is true sorrow for having offended Almighty God; but this sorrow to be true, must be supreme and universal: supreme, or exceeding any sorrow that any loss or misfortune in this life could cause. Supreme indeed would our sorrow be, if, reflecting seriously on the deplorable condition to which man is reduced, who is deprived of the friendship of God, we beheld the miseries which sin draws on us. So foul is sin, that all the fires of Hell and all the sufferings of the damned cannot, nor never will atone for one sin. Look to this, you who daily multiply and accumulate sin upon sin. Behold what sin is, which made the sufferings of a God necessary to wipe away the crime of Adam. The enormity of sin is the same this day that it ever was; it is as unchangeable as God himself, because it is essentially a rebellion against him, a breach of his law and an insult offered to his eternal Majesty. The loss of God's friendship entailed by sin, is so unspeakably great, that a knowledge thereof must necessarily excite a sorrow superior to all other sorrow; not only because we incur by sin the terrible vengeance of the Lord, but chiefly because we are cast off from his friendship and every claim to the kingdom of Heaven. The loss of health, of fortune, of friends: the attacks of pain, poverty or prisons and the other calamities of life, which are usually (although improperly) called evils, are of little consideration compared to the only true and real evil of sin. Those are transitory in duration and limited in effect; these unlimited and perennial, unless wiped away by penance. If sorrow therefore for evil could be proportioned

to the extent of the evil, the heart of the sinner should burst asunder, not so much for the unspeakable evils incurred by sin, as the ingratitude of displeasing the great and good God of Heaven, our kind protector, father and friend; from whom we receive all, who constantly supplies all, and from whom we expect all. But that sorrow arising from a feeling sense of our ingratitude, to be valid must be universal: It must not be confined to time or place, or circumstance: No partial sorrow for partial crimes will satisfy the justice of Heaven. It must comprehend and embrace all the crimes recorded against you in the chancery of Heaven; the crimes of youth, manhood and old age, with a firm deep-rooted purpose of amendment, and of forsaking not only those sins you have committed, but detesting all sin in general, as displeasing and offensive to our Sovereign Lord. A sorrow of this nature, universal and sincere, is necessarily attended by strong and effectual purposes of amendment, and of suffering any calamity, any loss, even of life itself, rather than offend by transgressing any material point of the Law. Without these sentiments and dispositions, there is no forgiveness to be expected in the Sacrament of penance. And this I think is a full and sufficient answer to those who do not blush to say, that the greatest sinners are always sure of meeting with absolution from our hands: No: the Church of Christ never promised any forgiveness, but when a sincere sorrow or compunction was accompanied by a firm resolution of sinning no more. Now let any one of reason judge, whether offering forgiveness to such persons as are thus highly concerned for having offended the Almighty God, and firmly resolved never more to offend him, for any consideration, or upon any account whatsoever; whether, I say, offering forgiveness to such persons and in such circumstances, be an incitement to sin or an inducement to iniquity? Or if it be not rather living up to the spirit of Jesus Christ,
who

who at the same time that he prohibited sin under the severest penalties, was graciously pleased to promise mercy and forgiveness to all repenting sinners? It is not necessary that this sorrow and compunction which are requisite for the Sacrament, should manifest itself by a certain outward sensibility. No; as sorrow is an affection of the Soul, it may reside there in its full vigour without breaking out into tears or lamentations. But then this inward contrition of the heart, so essential and yet so uncommon to meet with; besides, the continual immoralities in the conduct of many who frequently have recourse to the Sacrament, form the grounds of my apprehension, that the generality of Christians, instead of drawing benefit from this fountain of spiritual life and grace, increase their own condemnation. For all Divines agree with the Fathers, that no one can be deemed to have a true and sincere contrition for his sins, who continues in the same sinful habits, month after month, and year after year; because it cannot be deemed reasonable to suppose, that a man who was deeply and truly concerned for his sins, and firmly resolved, in the eyes of God, to forsake his nearest and dearest interests in life, even to lay down his life, were it necessary, rather than offend the Almighty God by any considerable transgression of the law (which dispositions are absolutely necessary for the Sacrament, as I have observed.) It cannot be deemed reasonable I say, that one possessed of these heroick and christian sentiments in the heart, should so readily and constantly forget them, and after forgetting, remain fixed, and as it were immoveably settled in the same sinful ways and practices. But contrition however perfect, is but the first step necessary to reap the benefits of the Sacrament of penance. Confession, or a candid humble declaration of sin to an approved clergyman, is also necessary.

Before we can pretend to make a true and full declaration of all our sins, it is necessary we know

and recollect them. For this purpose we should explore the windings of the heart, and search into the most secret recesses of conscience, as the Council of Trent recommends, by retiring in private, withdrawing for some time from all worldly occupations, and begging the assistance of the Holy Ghost. There, sequestered from the tumult and busy scenes of life, the commandments of the Lord should be introduced in regular order as accusers; the commands also of the Church, our respective states, and occupations; our duties as parents, guardians, debtors, wives, children, servants; and examining how far each command, each duty, each precept has been fulfilled, neglected, or violated. It becomes moreover necessary to examine and search the senses; how far each has gone astray, and to probe the principles, dispositions, and evil desires of the soul. Thus should a Christian prepare for confession; holding constantly before him the terror of God's judgments, and his unbounded mercies, the one to excite fear, the other love for the great Sovereign of the universe. Happy is he who behaves in this manner! Do not people generally content themselves with kneeling a few moments in prayer, and collecting what occurs to their minds at that time? "This is all I remember," say they: but Jesus Christ will remember their crimes, and their criminal neglect in preparing for the blessings intended by confession. How is it possible you should remember more in so short a time? In a few moments how is it possible to recall all the actions, all the omissions perhaps of a whole year? The thoughts you entertained, the desires you indulged, the words you expressed, the duties you neglected, and the obligations you transgressed? No; it is not possible. If you wish to receive the benefit of the Sacrament you must employ a proper time in examining your conscience; as much time at least as you would bestow on an affair of great consequence in the world. A diligent search into your different

ferent crimes is not only necessary, because it may be made hastily, timidly, or with distraction; it must be deliberate, and with due consideration. But admitting this search, or examination of conscience, so indispensable for confession, was diligent and deliberate, still guilt is usually attached to this part of preparation, because people seldom push the examination so far as they ought; they seldom take in the *whole* of their obligations. The necessary time in reason and prudence to look into their *entire* conduct, is not devoted to this branch of preparation, without which this Sacrament intended to convey spiritual life, will surely prove the cause of our condemnation. Outward and glaring crimes alone usually attract the notice of those who prepare for confession. Cursing, swearing, drunkenness, or excess, are seen and enumerated; but the secret vices of the heart are overlooked. Pride and anger, and their black windings are passed over. The sins of thought, of unlawful desire, the obscene images that fancy delighted in, the motions of jealousy and revenge are all forgotten. Glaring sins alone are brought into account, but the good works they are obliged by the law of God to perform, and which they neglected, they do not enquire into. If they rob, or steal, or cheat, they will, as they should, be sorry for and confess it: but sufficient nor seasonable time is not taken to look into other duties equally binding—forgiveness towards enemies, charity towards the poor, assiduity in prayer, respect and attention essentially requisite to the worship and service of the Lord. They will enquire into the general duties of a Christian, but not into those duties peculiar to their respective stations in life. Thus a father will not accuse himself, either for his neglect in educating his children in the love and fear of God, putting them forward in life, where their morals or their faith are in danger, or the scandalous examples he daily gives them in his private capacity at home. In like manner, a mother

ther will never accuse herself of filling the heads of her young daughters with the vanities and the crimes of the world ; nor of teaching them by the fripperies of dress (which with splendid means may be overlooked) and by novel-reading, the false arts of pleasing a mortal, whilst they are left entirely ignorant of all the duties of a Christian. Thus also, a master will never accuse himself of not keeping servants to proper orders in his house ; of not reprimanding them when they transgress the laws of God ; nor of omitting to remind and excite them, and allowing them time for the performance of the obligations of religion. Thus, in like manner, a servant will never accuse himself of doing negligently his master's business ; of dilapidating, or wasting his master's substance, or suffering it to be wasted by others. Thus, in fine, the labourer will not reproach himself for prolonging to ten or twelve days, the work which he could perform in six. This is the common way with most part of Christians, whence it clearly follows, they never declare but a slender share of their guilt to their spiritual judge, and consequently come unprepared for the great sacrament of confession. But are there not some who take time to search narrowly into their lives, and survey carefully the whole extent of their obligations ? God forbid but there should. Of this description I hope there are many : but even among these there is seldom found that true and sincere sorrow of heart for the sins they are guilty of. 'Tis usual with them to imagine they are reconciled infallibly with God by confessing their sins. No error is more pernicious. Are they truly penitent ? If not, what can confession avail, except to make them more guilty in the eyes of God ? If the heart be not truly changed and reformed, so as to renounce sin ; if you be not disposed to sacrifice your life, or a thousand lives rather than return to your sins any more ; the minister may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness over your heads, but the Sovereign Judge
above,

above, seated on a throne of anger, will reverse his decree, as St. Cyprian observes, and turn it into a sentence of reprobation. For, though the Sacraments contain the merits of the passion of Christ, those merits are not applicable but to such as remove all obstacles proceeding from sin, according to the express declaration of the Council of Trent. Can those be said to remove all the obstacles proceeding from sin, who only forsake sin in appearance? No: the first step to forgiveness, according to St. Peter, is repentance; and repentance consists in being truly sorry for sin, in humbly confessing sin, and of atoning for sin, by your future life.

A sincere desire of atoning by penance, or a chearful acceptance of any temporal calamity from Heaven, is that *satisfaction* which appeases Almighty God for the injury offered him or your neighbour by sin, and is essential to the Sacrament. you are not only bound to cut up by the root the causes of your former transgressions, but to fulfill such penance as the minister of Christ is bound to impose on you. Those vices, or habitual sins you are most subject to, should give place to virtues which stand in direct opposition to them. The habit of cursing and swearing should give way to adoration and praise, and prayer; of drunkenness and intemperance, to abstemiousness; of immorality, to virtue; of passion, to meekness; of fraud, to charity; of irreligion, to prayer; of incontinence, to chastity; and in general of vice, to virtue. These are the conditions necessary to validate the great power given by Christ to his Church to remit sins; and where these conditions, I mean these necessary dispositions of inward contrition, attended by effectual purposes of amendment, are wanting; then every confession becomes a sacrilege, that is, a horrid prophanation of the most holy things in religion, which are the precious and inestimable fruits of the blood of Jesus Christ. May not this be the case with each of ourselves
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in particular ; at least with many of us ? Let those therefore look into themselves who continue whole years (perhaps their whole lives) in the same evil habits of fraud and injustice, intemperance and lewdness, public usury or oppression. Let those likewise look into themselves, who in their dealings follow certain practices which are always attended with sin in the execution, since the end can never be attained without being plainly necessary to corruption or perjury. They go and are deemed to go to the Sacraments many times in the year. But do they go with a firm and effectual resolution of laying aside those sinful practices that are evil in themselves and evil in the execution ? If they do not, it were much better for them never to approach the Sacraments of the Lord ; because instead of receiving thereby the forgiveness of their sins, they only add crime to crime and iniquity to iniquity ; which crimes and iniquities will certainly end at length, if they do not reform, in their eternal perdition. I charge you therefore this day, on the part of Almighty God, not to deceive yourselves, nor be deceived by others. I charge you to confess your sins : to confess them in the dispositions I have laid before you, as prescribed by religion ; with true compunction or sorrow of heart ; an effectual, sovereign, supernatural, universal sorrow ; a sorrow superior to all other sorrows and accompanied by a determined purpose of amendment. Then you may confidently look up to your Saviour, who will say unto you, *Have confidence, child, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Grant us at all times, Lord Jesus ! and especially in the moment of death, to hear them divine words from your mouth, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy-Ghost one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N III.

ON A HABITUAL STATE OF SIN.

*Jesus saith to the man that was ill of the palsy,
rise up, take thy bed and go into thy house: and he
rose up and went into his house.*

Mat. 9 ch. 6. 7 v.

GREAT indeed were the emotions and lively the transports of joy, which the sick man mentioned in the Gospel, must have felt on seeing himself miraculously cured. After languishing for many years in a paralytic disorder, confined to a bed of sorrow, unable to assist himself, he caused himself to be brought before Jesus Christ, and as soon as he appeared before the Saviour of Mankind, so soon was he restored to perfect health. The restoration of health and the removal of his complaints, were alone sufficient to crown his desires and fill the heart with delight; but they were insufficient for the charity of a God: He not only cures this happy man of a grievous malady which affected his body, but grants him besides, by his own divine lips, the full remission of all his sins, *Son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Had Jesus Christ suffered him to remain in his sins, the restoration of his health could have been but of little consideration; but to forgive all his sins² and restore him thereby to the spiritual health and sanctity of soul, at the same time that he cured him of an inveterate and mortal distemper of body, was the greatest favor, the highest mercy Jesus Christ could bestow. These were words of the greatest consolation, and capable of raising the admiration and astonishment
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of those that heard them. But what is observable in the poor sick man, as we read in the Gospel, is, that he was sensible of his misery, so far as to employ the only effectual method of relief—an immediate and humble application to Jesus Christ. This poor sick man, full of infirmity and full of sin, feels and knows his lamentable situation. He applies for relief, where he knew relief only was to be found, from the redeemer of mankind, and he obtains it. But how far does this principle prevail among the degenerate Christians of our days? Although many of them are sick of the palsy, or languishing in a state of habitual sin, according to the explication made of this passage by the fathers and doctors of the Church; yet very few are seen to address themselves properly to Jesus Christ for his holy grace, to enliven, strengthen and invigorate their souls. Truly paralytic in the eyes of the Lord, they take no pains to obtain their recovery; and what is of equally bad consequence, they seem to have no apprehension for the dreadful situation they live in. By the terrible judgments of Heaven, those wholesome fears or apprehensions, which always afford hopes of conversion, are far removed from those who live in a state of habitual sin. Blindly and insensibly they rush on thro' life in the gratification of animal sense and corrupt passion; having eyes they see not, ears they hear not: for thy grace, O my God! seems far removed from them. Once more, O Lord! we pray thee open their eyes and their ears, that seeing they may behold the dangers that encompass them, and hearing, they may hear the words that I shall speak. Deeply let them sink in their minds, that meditating on them, they may produce the fruits of a sincere conversion. For my intention is to awaken your fears by exhibiting to your view the evils that surround you and the dreadful precipice ready to receive you. In a word I wish to convince the sinner that should he continue his wicked course

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course or life, eternal perdition will surely be his lot. The consideration of any subject which involves an infinite, eternal evil, must at all times be momentous, but particularly when this evil becomes by habit a species of necessity ; for

1st. The habit of sin, makes us at length entirely slaves to sin ; and

2d. The habit of sin debars us of all the mercies of the Lord.

First, no slavery or subjection is so great as that to which Man is reduced by the habit of sin, because then he sins with necessity and seeming security. Sinning by necessity is the natural consequence of the habit of sin, because every habit (it is the observation of St. Austin) becomes in the end a second nature. You all know from experience that nothing can be more deeply rooted, than the natural affections of the soul. The sentiments we are born with always reside in our hearts. They may be restrained and checked, but they never can be entirely suppressed. In like manner every habit which turns at length to a second nature, necessarily draws along with it an influence on the soul, extremely great. If this be the certain consequence with regard to habits of any kind, it is much more certain with regard to any sinful habit, wherein two powerful causes unite to subdue the soul and enslave her affections—the effects of custom and concupiscence. Were man born indifferent to evil, the frequency of sinning alone would tyrannize over his heart and bring it under the greatest subjection. From the bare consequence of custom, the commission of sin would become as familiar as any one of the functions of nature. But what influence must a habit obtain, which is supported and strengthened by the most violent inclinations of man and sanctioned by custom ? Truly it must then exert a lasting, universal and almost irresistible sway. Now this is manifestly the case in respect to an evil habit, born as we
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all are not only in sin, but possessing by nature a strong inclination or proclivity to sin.

This strong and violent inclination to evil which Divines call concupiscence, is one of the penalties entailed upon the guilty race of man, in consequence of the disobedience or prevarication of the first and universal parent of mankind. As it is a punishment of the guilt of our first parent, it must affect all those who have shared in his guilt—the whole race of man. This concupiscence it is, that continually urges us on to sin. The darkness it creates in the understanding makes us often mistake a real evil for an apparent good. The violent affections it raises in the heart, make us seek for unlawful gratifications; and frequently content ourselves with a false if not criminal felicity. It's influence is not indeed insurmountable, but very hard to surmount. Even to check it requires our utmost vigilance and care; and to subdue it constantly the most consummate virtue. It's attacks are no sooner resisted than renewed. Like a powerful and malicious enemy who lays hold of every opportunity to destroy us, and is so strongly bent on our ruin as not to be deterred even by repeated defeats from the prosecution of his destructive designs. Too fatally successful is our in-born domestick enemy concupiscence upon the peace and happiness of man; for it shakes the life of man with desires, pursuits and enjoyments, strong, eager and tumultuous; or with violent storms, with few intervals of calm or sunshine. Of this evil St. Paul complains when he cries out, *I feel a law within me always acting in opposition to the law of reason, the law of sin. It is this tyrannic law that hinders me from doing the good I would fain do, and urges me to the evil I would not willingly commit.* If the chosen friend of God complains thus; he who lived in times, when regularity of life, piety and virtue distinguished the faithful, as Tertullian assures us, what melancholy ideas must occur to our minds on a comparison with those unhappy times

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times when licentiousness and vice are made lawful by impunity, and honourable by custom; when *desolation hath overspread the whole face of the Earth?* By the evil operation of concupiscence, the heart of man is engaged, and seems filled with the honors, riches or pleasures of this life—the honors, than which nothing can be more vain or despicable in the view of reason, as they neither give, nor add to real merit; but serve to enlighten faults by exposing them to view: besides, being usually distributed by caprice or favor, they often fall on the most worthless and undeserving:—riches, the armour of sin, which are so far from conducing to happiness that they are usually the greatest obstacle thereto, inasmuch as they cannot be acquired without great labour and pain, possessed without care and solicitude, or lost without grief and affliction:—pleasures, or the gratification of sense, which have no other effect than to debase the mind, impair the constitution, banish peace and quiet, and fill the heart with bitterness and remorse; and whose mortal taste grows into desire, desire into use, use into practice, practice into custom, and custom into habit. If therefore this inward concupiscence be not restrained or opposed, but on the contrary, constantly indulged or gratified, is it not plain it must at length obtain over all our actions, an influence scarcely to be controuled?

This concupiscence, my Brethren, is the hidden source and secret spring of that slavery or subjection to sin, which is so very discernable in all hardened and habitual sinners. Frequently are we astonished to behold a person endowed with reason and informed of the principles of Christianity, resigning himself to, and living contentedly under, the empire of the most brutish and shameful passions. But our astonishment would cease, did we but consider the uncontrollable power the in-born corruption of nature must obtain, over the heart and affections of man, when strengthened by custom. From the united force of these con-

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current causes, it is clear, man under such dominion must be reduced to a perfect slavery, and a real necessity of committing sin. For St. Paul says, *don't you know that you become subservient to whatever you obey, righteousness or sin? If righteousness you obey, you are subjects to righteousness: but if it be sin, you are slaves to sin.* However great the slavery to which man is reduced by the habit of sin, it must be acknowledged it never is so great, as to deprive him of liberty and reduce him to an absolute and unconquerable necessity of doing evil. But it is this liberty, as St. Bernard justly remarks, that adds to his misfortune. For if from the influence of inveterate habit, a sinner were deprived entirely of his liberty, he could no longer sin, nor consequently appear guilty in the eyes of God. But because the most inveterate habit neither does nor can destroy, but only lessen and weaken in a high degree, the liberty of man, two things necessarily follow: the first, that we always sin, as often as we comply with an evil habit; and the second, that under the dominion of habit, more especially, if that habit be evil, it is almost impossible to resist it. Under the influence of any evil habit, however deep-rooted, however strong, we always retain liberty enough to decline, but not strength enough to conquer, Sin. Guilty then must we be, as often as we comply. But the power we retain of not committing sin, is so strongly opposed and so greatly weakened by the evil habit we labour under, as generally to remain useless and ineffectual. And this may be clearly seen from daily experience. For nothing is more common, than to hear people that are engaged in a vicious habit, declare when pressed by the ministers of Christ, to shake off the chains of sin, to alter their course of life and return to the Lord; nothing I say is more common than to hear them declare they would if they could, but that it is not in their power to do so. Let the most zealous man upon earth press a drunkard to lay aside his intemperance

intemperance, and live up to that sobriety the law requires; his answer is, that though he purposes frequently to do so, still he cannot avoid drinking, and drinking to excess. Those that are addicted to the unlawful gratification of sense, will tell you they cannot up-root this propensity from their hearts. Men of pleasure, of defamatory tongues, or idlers are so far lost to a sense of duty, that their different occupations are forsaken, their obligations suppressed by the evil bent of their evil habit. One who has given himself the custom of swearing, cursing and blaspheming, will swear, curse and blaspheme, even when he does not mean so to do: so great is the power of custom and so great is the influence of every evil habit on the mind. Dreadful should that situation appear in the eyes of a Christian, wherein he is brought under a necessity of transgressing continually the divine Law, because very little hopes can remain for the salvation of one under circumstances of this kind. The great benefit to be derived from a reflection of this kind is, to dread falling into a habitual state of sin, more than all the misfortunes upon earth. The misfortunes of the earth are loss of health, fame or fortune; and its scourges, wars, plagues and pestilence: these as well as those being seen and felt, may be avoided or retrieved; but evil habits draw a veil over the understanding, and obscure from its view equally the evil it creates, as the good it withholds. Should you at any time have the misfortune to transgress the divine Law, through frailty or surprise; take care not to remain in that sinful state, but return quickly by repentance unto the Lord your God: for by remaining any time in sin, you will soon renew it; and by renewing, the habit will soon be formed; and when the habit is once formed, you become fettered and a slave to sin. In such a situation you will certainly experience that you frequently sin through a sort of necessity, and what is still worse, with the utmost security.

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Whilst a sinner retains the fear of God and has some apprehension of his most dreadful judgments, there remain always some hopes of Salvation; because the fear of God being an active principle, it may one time or other operate with success. Wholesome reflections, a pathetic sermon, some unexpected misfortune, the prudent advice of a zealous friend, have frequently stirred up sinners, not entirely lost to the fear of God, to a true and sincere repentance. But where this inward principle is entirely destroyed, or weakened to an imperceptible degree, there the prospect, if any, can be but very small of amendment. *The fear of the Lord*, says the Royal Prophet, *is the beginning of wisdom*; and consequently of all righteousness. If therefore this fear be wanting, which is the commencement of the heavenly wisdom that inclines our minds to God, it is plain nothing but eternal perdition can ensue. Now the immediate and necessary consequence of a sinful habit, is to destroy the fear of God within us; to leave us no apprehensions of his justice; but on the contrary, to fill our minds with the most daring and criminal presumption. For every man in a confirmed habit of sin, says like unto the impious man in holy-writ, *I have sinned; and what evil hath befallen me?* The extraordinary bounty of God, who only spares him as yet to give him time to repent, makes him imagine he has nothing to fear even for the time to come. What should be unto him, then, an incitement to conversion, namely the excessive bounty and forbearance of the Lord, is the very thing that encourages him to run on quietly and resolutely in his wicked courses of life. At length he arrives to such a point of insensibility, as to have no other concern upon him, than to gratify himself continually with the most sensual enjoyments; like those wicked and hardened wretches, mentioned in the scriptures, who said: *let us live cheerfully to-day, for to-morrow we must die.* Sometimes the Almighty to rouse him from this mortal lethargy, is pleased

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to employ the severity of his justice, but all in vain; his heart is grown so hard as to feel no apprehensions even of divine vengeance. No examples, no forbearance, no invitations can operate. Amidst the most flaming expressions of the wrath of God, he stands as unmoved and unconcerned as Pharaoh did amidst the terrifying prodigies wrought by Moses in Egypt. All the great principles of religion are entirely banished from his mind—the Love of God, the fear of his judgments, the desire and hopes of eternal happiness. He fears nothing, expects nothing, looks for nothing; at the very time that he has every thing to fear, to expect and look for. He lives in the greatest security in the midst of the greatest dangers; but the false tranquillity he enjoys, is of worse consequence than the most furious storms: for the Apostle St. Paul assures us, *when sinners think themselves most in safety, 'tis then sudden death and destruction shall rush down upon them.* This surely must be the case: for the Lord if slow, is equally sure in dealing vengeance as shewing mercy. Danger is never greater than whilst it remains unperceived. The storm that is seen gathering at a distance, may be guarded against; but that which suddenly and unexpectedly bursts over our heads must carry death and destruction along with it. What can be more certain (St. Bernard asks the question) than that man must perish, who neither feels nor fears the fires that kindle and burn around him? Now this is precisely the situation of every man in a confirmed habit of sin, as he rests every moment in the arms, and reposes on the brink of destruction, without so much as perceiving it. The sinful dispositions he lives in are the very source of his eternal perdition: yet they appear no way dreadful in his eyes. He runs on gladly and giddily in the flowery walks of iniquity, without considering that every step leads him on precipitately to everlasting ruin. Much like the Egyptians, who in their fiery resentment,

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were bold enough desperately to pursue the Israelites into the Red Sea; but were no sooner entered, than the waters which before stood miraculously suspended on either side, rushed down upon their heads and overwhelmed them all in one common ruin. Thus it is a sinful habit brings us under a necessity of transgressing the divine laws, and reduces us to the greatest insensibility in sinning: from which we have a right to conclude, it enslaves us to sin. Is not this the most dreadful situation a Christian can fall into? But how many perhaps in this congregation, who have already fallen into this dreadful situation? Some of you perhaps, have for many years past led a life of continual sin against the Lord, whereby sin became habitual. Habitual sin you have seen tyrannizes over our faculties and enslaves us to sin—it does more, it debars us of all the mercies of the Lord, as we come now to consider in the second part.

II. Of all the evils to which human nature is subject, none is so lamentable as that arising from a state of habitual sin. Sin, however enormous, if casual or temporary, may by penance through Christ be blotted out: but to sin by custom or habit is in some measure to shut out the mercies of the Lord, to defy his power and relinquish all claim to life everlasting. It is very consistent with the character of Man, to return by ingratitude and insult the tender mercies of the Lord: but it requires other expressions than I know of, to convey an idea of the folly of such conduct, in relation to the evils it necessarily draws upon man himself. Almighty God you shall see, is constantly watching and studying to make man happy, by withdrawing him from sin: but sinful man will not accept of happiness from the bounty of God, but lash at the hand stretched out to receive him.

Master as he is of all his gifts, Almighty God distributes them, when, where, and in such proportions as he thinks fit: *I will be merciful to whom I will.*

will. Some finners there are who abandon the Lord, but whom the Lord never abandons. This is clearly expressed by the Royal Prophet, when he says, *The Lord is always near unto and round his own people. He is with them to-day; he will be with them to-morrow: he will be with them for ever and ever.* Notwithstanding their obstinacy and malice in resisting his calls, and persevering in ways highly offensive to the Divinity, yet Almighty God never ceases to look upon them with a propitious eye, and protect them as it were under the shadow of his wings. The more unworthy they prove, the more the Almighty takes pleasure in shewing them the greatest mercies; not because they deserve any, but because he is the God of all mercies. Like the good shepherd, he seeks, he pursues them the moment they go astray; never rests until he finds them, and after finding, puts them on his shoulders, and brings them back triumphantly to the fold. When most strongly, most fully resolved and determined upon their own destruction, it is then the infinite bounty of God interferes and resolves to prevent it: for on the very brink of the precipice he is pleased frequently to stretch forth his all-saving hand, to prevent their falling, or perishing in the fall. Such was his conduct towards Peter the Apostle and first Bishop of his church: For although he had the misfortune, in the hall of Pontius Pilate, of denying his master, our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, with all the aggravations of guilt that could accrue from horrid curses and prophane maledictions, yet he had no sooner denied him, and incurred by the act the just anger of Heaven, than mercy issued from the tender looks of Jesus, and pierced the heart of Peter; his soul then became filled with the deepest sorrow and compunction, retiring and bursting forth into floods of tears, as the Gospel informs us, and lamenting with emotions too big for utterance the infidelity he had been guilty of. Other

sinners there are, who abandon God, and whom in turn likewise God abandons,—but only for a time. Although he withdraws from them in fact, he only withdraws to a certain distance. Insensibly he draws nearer and nearer, and never ceases to impart his holy grace, until he brings them on to a thorough sense of their duty. He does not subdue their hearts at once, and if I may be allowed the expression, storm them by strong victorious and unresisted strokes of mercy. This would be destroying that liberty, which, as I have observed elsewhere, is the special privilege of man, and by which alone God will be served. But then he is continually enlightening their minds, moving and inciting their hearts, until by slow and regular, but sure advances, he becomes entirely master thereof. Such was his conduct towards David the king of Israel. That Prince in a moment fatal to his innocence, became guilty of two very heinous sins, adultery and murder. Undoubtedly it was in the power of God to convert him the very moment he had sinned. But this he was not pleased to do. On the contrary, he suffered him to remain many days in his sins, before he directed his prophet Nathan to reproach the king with his crimes, and make him sensible of his errors, and disobedience to the Lord. No sooner was the king made sensible of his crimes, than he cried out for mercy, and mercy he obtained. Thus has he behaved towards the Jews, who almost constantly provoked him by their rebellions and infidelity, to withdraw all his graces; yet as often as they turned their hearts with sincerity to the Lord, so often in mercy did he receive them, and deliver them from the sword and chains of their enemies, which the just anger of Heaven had let loose upon them, in punishment of their crimes.

Let us look farther and we shall see other sinners, who abandoning God, God likewise abandons, almost entirely, almost for ever. I do not mean

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to say, that ever the Almighty God abandons even the greatest sinners, so far as to refuse them all sorts of divine grace or assistance. No: this would be destroying the brightest attribute of the Lord, his goodness; for was this the case, the law would become entirely impracticable, violent temptations insurmountable, and eternal perdition unavoidable. Was this the case, thousands there are of our brethren and fellow-christians upon Earth, who could not pronounce the very first words of the Lord's prayer with any expectation of mercy, nor call upon their Creator by the tender name of Father, as Jesus Christ directs and commands all the faithful indiscriminately to do. All sound Divines are united in opinion, that the greatest sinners are never deprived at least of the grace of prayer. But what I mean to say is, that there are some sinners whom God abandons so far, as to deprive them of all the special graces and assistances of Heaven; those graces that render it easy to subdue their passions, conquer temptation, and fulfil the most difficult points of the Law. Of all those whom God thus forsakes, none are more remarkable than habitual sinners; none whom his judgments and visible reprobation more clearly mark out as objects of future vengeance, by suffering them to grow hardened in sin, and, cloathed with sin, to descend into the grave. *O! why will you die*, the Lord cries out, but he cries in vain; for the habitual sinner in rejecting the mercies, despises the threats of the Lord his God: but when the dream of life is over, he in turn shall cry out, but cry in vain, for the Lord shall be deaf to his cries for ever and ever. All this is clearly laid down in various places in holy-writ; thus we read in the 51st ch. of the Prophet Jeremias, *we would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let us forsake her.* O how dreadful is that separation which is made between God and the sinner! Thus again we find the Holy Ghost speaking by the Prophet Isaiahs, in the 55th ch. *seek ye the*

Lord while he can be found, invoke him while he is near unto you. From these passages it plainly appears, that there is a time in which the Lord is not to be found; a time in which he withdraws his grace from us; and consequently a time in which he does in reality abandon us. Jesus Christ says likewise in the Gospel (listen all you sinners, and while you listen, tremble) *you shall seek me and you shall not find me; you shall die in your sins.* But who are they whom the Almighty God abandons in this manner? Those that live in a habitual state of sin. For be pleased to observe, the observation is of great importance for you to reflect on, that, as in the principles of religion no one action we perform in a state of grace and from an inspiration of the holy spirit, but procures us, in virtue of the merits of Christ, an addition or augmentation of grace: so likewise there is not any one sin we commit, but produces a diminution or deprivation of grace: I have often told you before this truth, verified by the mouth of Jesus Christ, *he that hath shall receive more; but he that hath not, shall even lose what he hath.* If therefore from every sin we commit a privation of grace necessarily ensues, what privations, what losses must follow from multiplied heaped-up sins, and repeated daily transgressions? Think on this betimes you drunkards, swearers, slanderers, voluptuous and worldly men; reflect how miserable must your situation be, who spend years upon years, perhaps your whole lives, in iniquity and dissoluti^on; in a continual and open violation of the laws of God. People living in such depravity as I have mentioned, to whom sin is familiar and habitual, must they not at length be reduced to the greatest want of divine grace and assistance? In this deep want of divine grace and assistance, what clouds of darkness must hang over the mind? what corruption, what dissoluti^on must eternally rule the heart?

The light shall be taken away from the impious, the Holy Ghost declares in the 38th ch. of Job: that

is, the light of Grace which before enlightened their minds, shall be extinguished, or at least shine so faintly as to make little or no impression thereon. *My own people would not hear my voice*, says the same eternal truth, complaining in the 80th psalm of King David; but observe the consequence, *for which reason, I have given them up to the corrupted desires of their hearts; henceforth they shall walk in ways of their own invention.* This indeed is not only dreadful, but the most dreadful punishment an offended God can inflict; because all other punishments are not inconsistent with, but rather conducive to eternal happiness. Whilst the Almighty visits us with his holy grace, the greatest hardships we can endure, may become profitable unto our souls. Under the heaviest strokes of adversity, we may and often do become agreeable unto God, so long as he is pleased to favour us with his holy grace. But when once we are deprived of grace, there can be no prospect of eternal happiness. The loss of Grace therefore, is the only thing that should properly be called a punishment, or accounted a misfortune. This loss of grace, and by consequence this heavy punishment and dreadful misfortune, is the usual, I may say, the certain punishment of those who live in a habitual state of sin; as appears more fully from what the prophet Isaias says, *blind the heart of this people, O Lord; obstruct their ears, close up their eyes; lest they may see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts: and lest they be converted and saved.* It is right indeed, and perfectly equitable, that the Almighty God, who essentially is no less just than merciful, no less jealous of his own glory and honor, than desirous of the happiness of all mankind, that he, I say, should not bear for ever, the atrocious insults he daily receives from all those who frequently and habitually transgress and violate his holy laws. It is not my meaning to curtail the patience or the unbounded mercies of the Lord; but I am as far from deceiv-

ing you by stretching them beyond the bounds of his ordinary providence. Resting on this point, I say, that the habitual sinner is an abomination before him, and that his patience has limits. Do not imagine that the great God, who swears by his holy self, he will never suffer the honour due unto him to be given, transferred or prostituted unto any other, will allow himself to be stript of that honour by daring sinners, without punishing the audacious and sacrilegious attempt. No: it is incumbent on the Divinity to vindicate his own glory, when abused by habitual sinners. His slighted mercies must and will at length give way to his inflexible justice. The all-powerful hand which dispensed for many years nothing but blessings the most valuable, must at length take up the bolts of divine wrath, and hurl destruction on the guilty heads of all the obstinate habitual transgressors of his holy laws. He may indeed manifest his vengeance by temporal punishments of various kinds: but the Lord does it in a manner more suitable to his dignity, to his rigour, to his unappeasable anger, and more capable of satisfying his justice,—by abandoning his enemies to their own iniquities, withdrawing his powerful graces, and giving them up a prey to the never-ending flames of Hell.

To prevent, then, so great and irreparable a misfortune, we are all bound to appease the justice of the Lord, by a true, sincere and timely repentance, whilst time yet remains; for when the sun of life shall set,—*when night comes on no man can work*: no repentance then, no atonement, but everlasting woes shall reward the sinner. Let all you, then, who by habits of blasphemy, injustice, drunkenness, debauchery, lying or idleness, stand opposed by your lives to the mercies of the Lord, be converted I say unto the Lord your God. He calls, he invites you by my words to forsake your evil habits and be converted unto him. O *why will*

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will you die? provoked as he is by our repeated sins, as yet he has not forsaken us. As yet he visits us by his holy grace and offers mercy within our reach. But I charge you this day on the part of the Almighty, not to abuse the call, the invitation to conversion he now holds out, lest by his terrible judgments he should deliver you to a re-proved sense, to your own corruptions, and to final impenitence. Jesus Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. John: be attentive: *As there is a little light in you, walk therefore while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you:* the darkness of understanding and insensibility which necessarily follow from a confirmed habit of sin. This warning which I now give you, is perhaps the last powerful grace which Almighty God will give many of you who hear me. Use it well, then, by returning speedily to the Lord. Guilty as you may be, he is still ready to receive you, to forgive you, to embrace you. The blood of Christ which blotted out the sins of all mankind upon the Cross, is still crying out for mercy for you. Do not lose the last prospect of Salvation, by resisting continually the graces of God, and abusing his excessive mercies. *The axe is laid to the root:* a few moments perhaps will fell the tree; and down it goes to everlasting flames. If this be dreadful, as it really is, why don't we take some pains to shelter ourselves from the wrath of Heaven? This wrath cannot be appeased but by forsaking sin, and returning firmly and sincerely unto the Lord. This firm and sincere return unto the Lord cannot be obtained but by a particular grace from the giver of all good gifts. Let us therefore humbly and earnestly implore this necessary blessing through the merits of Jesus Christ, saying, with the Prophet, *Convert us, O Lord, and we shall be converted.* Dispel the darkness of our minds, by thy heavenly light: soften the hardness of our hearts, by the influence

S E R M O N III.

of thy powerful grace; loosen and break, and tear asunder the chains that bind and fasten us to the yoke of sin, that we may be able to walk with liberty in the ways of righteousness, to the very last moment of our lives; and thereby attain the great and glorious reward, thou, O God, hast promised to all those who love and serve thee upon Earth—life, joy, and glory, in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

ON SANCTITY, OR, GODLINESS.

*Take heed therefore, Brethren, how you walk warily,
not as unwise, but as wise men : redeeming time.*

Ep. Eph. 5. c. 15. & 16. v.

THERE is a prudence of the flesh which consists in studying and pursuing our worldly advantages, without any great regard to the vastly more material interests of our souls, as St. Paul says, *the terrestrial man seeketh terrestrial things* : but there is likewise a prudence of the spirit, which proceeds from, and directs us unto God, as the same Apostle says, *the celestial man seeketh celestial things*. This prudence of the spirit, or heavenly wisdom, constantly urges us in opposition to our carnal enemies, to *walk warily—redeeming time* : to be careful in avoiding sin which leads to death, and to pursue the ways of sanctity or godliness which lead to Heaven. That time is lost, in the scripture meaning, which is spent in follies or criminal pursuits, and time so lost can only be redeemed by works of justice or godliness. Of this point St. Paul is a brilliant instance. Before his conversion, a formidable conspirator against, and a wicked persecutor of the Church of God ; after conversion, *redeeming time*, and atoning for his past sins, by becoming the ablest supporter then living of that Church he before persecuted. *By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace hath not been in me in vain*. Thus spoke St. Paul, from a consciousness of having corresponded by his actions to that sanctifying grace which almighty God poured into him. His labours he knew were to last only for a

time, but the rewards were to have no end. This consideration was enough to support him under all sorts of persecutions, hardships, and trials; under cold and hunger, poverty and distress; under imprisonment and stripes, and sorrows, by sea and land, in winter and summer, from friends and enemies. After such afflictions and trials, I say, without such afflictions or trials, which of us could say, as he did, that the grace of God was not in vain in him? The grace of God which made St. Paul such a miracle of sanctity, we all received; but the ill use we make of this grace, is the reason why it produces not the same effects now as it did in former days. In our infancy the great blessing of instruction, and of being reared up in the true faith, in preference to thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures, who by the mysterious judgments of the Lord, were left in the shades of infidelity and error, is a most distinguished grace. Still greater is the grace of conversion, because sin creates such an opposition to grace, that nothing less than the omnipotence of God can remove it. Good thoughts, effectual desires, strong resolutions, are all produced by grace; as are sermons, instructions, counsels, the various opportunities of knowing God by the sacrifice of the altar, and the homage of the heart. These abundant graces, which would have sanctified the yellow savage of the southern hemisphere, we have most criminally abused. How much reason we have to fear from the justice of God for this abuse of his grace, may be easily inferred from the severity he used to the indolent servant for neglecting to make proper use of the talent he received. In granting us grace, almighty God proposes sanctifying us, or enabling us to lead a just, holy, and righteous life. Of this men in general do not think as they should, or if they do, they act differently from what they think. Piety and virtue are words of deep meaning—for reasoning, not practice. Be you not *unwise, but as wise men*, in following me with docile hearts, whilst I combat an error

error of such magnitude, by shewing—first, that every man is obliged to lead a just and virtuous life ; —and secondly, that it is much easier to lead a just and virtuous life than people usually imagine. The obligation of virtue, and the facility of virtue form foundation of what I shall lay before you.

I. As the tree is known by its fruit, so is real virtue known by the effects it produces in the life of man—sanctity and godliness. By sanctity and godliness we are not to understand withdrawing ourselves entirely from the world, renouncing our fortunes, or friends, practising very great austerities, or doing other extraordinary things. No: these indeed are frequently the attendants upon sanctity and holiness ; but they do not consist in such extraordinary things. True sanctity and holiness consist in a faithful and constant observance of the law of God. By fidelity on our parts in conforming to this holy law, it is the bounden duty of all to endeavour to attain this sanctity and godliness, as will appear more clear from considering the end of our creation, and the spirit of our holy religion.

The end for which man was created, was the glory of God; *for my glory I have created man.* The first principles of the Christian religion are, that God made man : for what end? To love and serve God. This is truly the great and universal end of mankind, which admits of no exception. People of all classes, of every age and climate, without distinction of rank or condition, high or low, rich or poor, great or small, all are universally obliged to love and serve God, by fulfilling punctually and constantly his holy laws, which in reality is attaining and living in a state of sanctity or holiness. Almighty God could not have created man for any other end. Essentially wise in all his acts, the Lord must have proposed some view to himself in creating man : this view is no other than his own honour and glory, because every thing besides is unworthy the Divinity. It cannot be supposed

posed that the God of wisdom could have created man immortal, intelligent, and free, merely to abandon him to the base and grovelling appetites of sense; to the guidance and direction of his passions, without laying down any rules for his conduct, without recalling his thoughts to, and fixing his affections on the divine source of his existence, and intellectual perfections. A supposition of this kind is repugnant to the very first dictates of natural reason: and yet however hostile such a supposition may be to truth, reason, and religion, it is the christian doctrine, I mean the unchristian doctrine of your modern libertines and sensualists. They cannot conceive why eyes should be placed in their heads, without allowing those eyes to range abroad in quest of gratification, however extravagant; nor why sensuality or animal desire should be restricted or forbidden. Still less will they repress the criminal passions of the mind, grown wild by indulgence. But it is your pride I hope, as it should be that of all Christians, to subject unto the law as well the senses of the body, as the propensities of the soul. To this were you all called. For this end were you created. To deviate from this end, by brutalizing our noble faculties, and assimilating them to the brute beast of the field, is deviating from the end of our creation. The end of our creation is most rational, most noble—to know, acknowledge, and revere the supreme power of our Maker, by living continually in obedience to his holy laws; or in that sanctity and holiness of life which is an essential title to the kingdom of Heaven. This noble end implies an obligation on our parts; and this obligation is enforced by precepts, or laws, to which a faithful compliance must assuredly lead to the full possession of life everlasting. On the other hand, where rewards have been annexed to a compliance with the law; and those rewards so grand, so durable, so incomprehensible, it necessarily follows, that punishments should also be annexed to the violation of this law; and these

these punishments severe, eternal, and dreadfully horrible. To avoid these punishments and merit those rewards, is the great end of our creation. We were all born, not to make fortunes or cut figures in the world, not to indulge but repress appetite, not to mount up to rank or station by trampling on justice, and setting conscience adrift, but merely to honour and glorify almighty God, in obeying his laws, and, by honouring and glorifying God by such obedience, to sanctify our souls.

The sanctification of our souls by a godly life was the true end for which we came into the world. *It is the will of God*, St. Paul says, *that you sanctify yourselves*. But has the will of God in this particular been the governing principle of our conduct in life? So far from it, I dare say, that this great and important duty has seldom found a place among your thoughts. *Who is he and we shall praise him*, that reflects seriously on the obligation he lies under of steadily pursuing the paths of sanctity and godliness? Look back into your past lives and see if you have spent one single day in the pursuit of righteousness. Too great an attachment to, or too much neglect of your different avocations, cannot be called the pursuit of righteousness; much less can the criminal practices, or criminal omissions, to which all your avocations are more or less liable. Plays, balls, drefs, slander, and novels, form the general occupation of those fair ones, on whom in the eyes of men the world smiles. But are these the pursuits of righteousness? Do the smiles of the world draw down the smiles of Heaven? Much happier in my estimation is that poor sick woman in rags, who, with humble resignation, lifts up her heart, and blesses the hand that afflicts her, whilst she sees her fellow-creature and a lap-dog carried about in stately pomp. The sanctified works of the law hold no place in the general estimation of mankind: and hence it is, as consequence follows cause, or shadow substance, that the precious
time

time of life is wasted in idleness and vanity, if not licentiousness and dissipation. That time granted for the sanctification of our souls is employed in acquiring and amassing the perishable wealth of this world, but one hour scarce employed in the great end for which alone we were created. When life shall end, when those busy scenes shall pass away wherein men now appear so agitated, of what avail will be all those turmoils and strifes, those cares and troubles, when summoned to the tribunal of Christ to give an account of your administration here below? What answer will you be able to make, when almighty God shall enquire of you, in what manner you had passed your days upon earth? Whether conformable to the end for which you were created, by honouring God and sanctifying your souls; or in a manner inconsistent with that end, by pursuing only the glittering advantages held out by this deceitful world, and the gratification of animal sense? Whether to the glory of God, or the dishonour of his holy name? Agreeable to the light of reason, or in the most irrational, if not in the most scandalous pursuits? I take upon me to say that there is hardly any one of you, but must acknowledge within your own breast, that you have been going astray almost all the days of your life, and continually declining from the great end of your creation—the glory of God and the sanctification of your soul. *We have been wearying ourselves,* says the Royal Prophet, *in the ways of iniquity; and continually going astray from the paths of righteousness,* in which we should have walked incessantly from the moment we attained the years of discretion. A barren knowledge of this truth, unproductive of good, will only add crime to crime. It must be followed by salutary, effectual, decisive resolution. A resolution superior to flesh and blood, grounded on the love of God for you, and the love you should return your God by a virtuous and holy life. Humble yourselves in the presence of the great Being who made you, who watches, protects,

protects, desires to make you happy in the ways of godliness. Look back on your past errors with sorrow and compunction. Re-enter the ways of virtue you perhaps have long since deserted, and persevere therein to the last period of your lives. For this is a most indispensable duty; a duty incumbent on us all, not only from the end of our creation, but likewise from the very spirit of our religion.

The holy religion you profess, has no object in view, in all her ceremonies, sacraments, and most holy sacrifice, but the honour of God and the sanctification of your souls. This is the very spirit of religion to sanctify the heart, and lead you on in the ways of godliness. The Apostle St. John says, *our religion is holy and unspotted*. To this holy religion have we been called by a particular blessing from God; it is therefore plain we must have been intended for that sanctity and holiness our religion prescribes. This is the argument St. Paul made use of to the primitive Christians, as we read in his epistles: for after exhorting them to walk according to the knowledge they had received of the obligations of Christianity, he directs them to *abound more and more*, or daily make new advances, new improvements in virtue: on what grounds? *Because we are called not to uncleanness, but to holiness*: hence it clearly follows, that holiness is necessarily implied in our very vocation to the Christian religion. Moreover, by baptism we have been engrafted in the mystical body of Christ, and made members of *that Church, or assembly of believers, which Jesus Christ hath sanctified with his blood, that they might be without wrinkle or stain*. By this mystical insertion or association with the Church of Christ, we make up a part of *that holy nation, that royal priesthood, that people of acquisition, which Jesus Christ hath purchased with his blood*, as St. Paul hath further said. The great pains St. Paul has taken to inform the early Christians of the dignity of their religion, and the manner of their call from the darkness

darkness of infidelity and error, wherein almost the whole world then lay buried, was to inculcate strongly into their minds the terms on which that call, that grace was bestowed; namely, by a sanctified and godly life to fulfil the duties prescribed by that holy religion. The same instruction the Holy Ghost this day holds out to your consideration: by a particular mercy have you been called to the fold of Christ, whereof Christ himself is the shepherd, or pastor. Often have you gone astray by sin; often has he sought and found you, and brought you on his shoulders to the fold. This fold or family of Christ is the Church, whereof every member is bound by every obligation to holiness, as I have already laid before you. Laying before you those obligations to sanctity and holiness required indispensably of every member of the Catholic Church, is not fulfilling the end I have in view, unless you all are firmly convinced of this obligation; because a firm conviction of those obligations is the first step to execute them. Have you ever seriously considered before the high rank you are all raised to, by being members of the Catholic Church, and the duties you are bound to by that rank, which are, to fulfil all the precepts of the Church? In place of the Jews, who by their crimes were cast off by the Lord, and as you see them this day a sad spectacle of the prophecies and judgments of the Lord, the outcast of all nations, without either country, or Prince, or Prophet, or Temple, or Sacrifice; in their place I say, have you been engrafted in the mystical body of Christ, members of his holy Church, heirs to the beautiful tabernacles of Jacob in Heaven, an holy priesthood, and purchased by the blood of a God. Those blessings, those dignities will draw down a double damnation from that almighty hand that now cherishes you, unless by a holy and sanctified life—by forsaking your past sins, lamenting them bitterly, and re-entering the ways of justice and godliness, you fulfil the obligations prescribed by religion. Those obligations

gations are so great and indispensable, that no one is admitted into the Church of Christ who does not solemnly engage to fulfil constantly all the injunctions of the Christian faith, which constitute true virtue and holiness. For this end are sponsors required as sureties, who answer for, and promise most solemnly on behalf, and in the name of children at baptism. Baptism affixes the seal of God upon all Christians, who are ever after bound to fulfil what they then promise, of renouncing Satan and all his works, this wicked world and all its pomps and vanities, with all the sinful lusts of the flesh: that they will besides for ever serve almighty God, and faithfully keep his holy commandments. What is all this but a most solemn engagement to sanctity and holiness? without this previous and solemn engagement of resisting the seductions of our invisible enemies, and the attacks of our more dangerous domestic enemies, our passions, we never could be admitted into or incorporated with the Church of Christ. Why so? Because sanctity and godliness being the whole aim, the very essence and spirit of Christianity, it were the greatest enormity, the most monstrous absurdity, to receive any one into the Church of Christ, before he publicly and solemnly engaged to lead a righteous and holy life, by fulfilling all the laws and maxims of that Church. For as St. Paul observes, *what alliance can there be between light and darkness; justice and iniquity; the children of God and the slaves of Belial?* Virtue and vice cannot dwell together. We must arise from sin, as Lazarus did from the tomb, and resolutely follow the ways of justice; or in vain do we glory in being members of the fold of Christ, members of his mystical body; and in vain do we look up towards the glorious rewards, the immortal crowns which the Catholic Church points out to our view, and within our reach, in the kingdom of God. As you have seen that, according to the expression of St. Paul, *you have been transferred from the darkness of infidelity to the admirable light of the Christian faith;*
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from iniquity to justice, from the slavery of Belial to the glorious and inestimable liberty of the children of God, it is incumbent on you in the highest degree to lay aside the works of darkness, and pursue the works of light; to renounce all iniquity and fulfil all justice, to shake off the chains of Belial which now bind you, and live in subjection to God alone. The great importance of this lesson given by the spirit of God, (who is God himself,) in the words of St. Paul, appears from this consideration, and think of it every day you live, that your ALL is at stake; not the empty baubles of life, not its honours, which are smoke, nor its wealth which moulders, nor its pleasures which cloy and vanish; but immortality, life, and joy immense and eternal: what is more, if you do not forsake sin, which this day on the part of God I charge you to forsake; if you do not take up a virtuous and godly life, to which the Church this day sweetly invites you by my ministry; and if, in proportion as the graces poured on you were great, whereby you see the way of life, and you refuse to enter, so shall the fires below exercise a double vengeance, in satisfying the inflamed justice of an angry God, for the abuse of such graces. These are truths, my Brethren, you seldom dwell upon: and hence arises the deluge of immoralities and vices, and prophanations which are at once the misfortune and the reproach of the present age. No matter how black or numerous your sins have been, forsake them this day, and Jesus Christ has his arms extended to receive you. He promises comfort to your souls, and peace in the paths of sanctity. It is possible that some of you have never complied with the duties you were bound to, since you attained the age of discretion: it is possible that many of you have enlisted under the banners of Satan—by constantly pursuing sinful ways; the wicked ways of life, its pomps and vanities: it is possible that some of you have never served God, or obeyed his holy laws: nevertheless return this day, and mercy, grace and peace you shall receive.

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You have the word of God for it by St. Paul, *Where sin abounded, grace shall more abound.* By grace then we see, and it is grace that teaches us that our whole life has been no more than one continued open violation of the engagements we contracted at baptism.

It is not in baptism alone we take upon us the strict obligations of holiness. The profession we daily make of the Christian faith, in the Apostles creed, necessarily implies the same obligation. St. John says the same; *whoever declares he belongs to Christ, is bound in virtue of this declaration to walk as he did.* Very justly he laid so; for what can be more reasonable, than that the member should be conformable to the head, and the disciple submissive and obedient to the directions and commands of his master? Or can any thing be more shocking to common reason, than that a man who professes himself a Christian, shall think himself entitled to lead a most unchristian life? No: he must either renounce all title to Christianity, or renounce all iniquity; disclaim the Christian name, or fulfil the duties attendant upon it. In a word, every man who declares himself a Christian, should be in reality as far as human frailty can admit, a living pattern of Christ; according to what he says in the Gospel, *be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect.* Following which idea St. Paul says, *he that is just let him become more and more just, and he that is holy let him become more and more holy.* This is a fundamental point of religion, and the very first principle the primitive Christians imbibed, as appears clearly from their conduct, which was so regular in every respect, and so conformable to the laws and maxims of Jesus Christ, that St. Paul bestowed on them the illustrious name or appellation of saints. But what resemblance do we who profess ourselves Christians, bear to Jesus Christ, or even to his first followers? The life of Christ was never stained with the least imperfection, and ours is composed of the greatest crimes, the most heinous transgressions. The life
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of Christ was all charity and goodness;—ours one continued scene of violence, animosities and dissensions. The life of Christ was all employed in glorifying his Father; ours is all employed in dishonouring his holy name, abusing his gifts, and inverting order. Is this living up to the obligations of our holy religion? Is it not rather offering incense to Belial at the very time we pretend to honour the living God? Whilst our lives and our actions are so widely different from the life and actions of Jesus Christ, how can we call, or suffer ourselves to be called Christians? Let us then blush, in a spirit of compunction, at our former infidelity, and begin henceforward to be what we should have been from our entrance into life—true Christians: or, in other words, men of upright principles and holy lives. Remember this is a most indispensable, as well as a most universal obligation: an obligation grounded on the very end of our creation, and the very spirit of Christianity. But how is it possible, you may say, to lead a virtuous and holy life amidst the distractions, dangers and dissolution of the world? It is not to be done without difficulty, I allow; but still I maintain the difficulty is not so great as you generally imagine; and this you will see verified in the second part of this discourse.

II. To shew you that a holy and sanctified life, founded on the accomplishment of the law of God, (notwithstanding its seeming difficulties and the infirmities of nature) is easy in the execution, must at once be consoling to human weakness, and encouraging to all to commence this life of sanctity. For whatever difficulties occur in the prosecution of the design, which are always magnified, they must proceed either from rigour in the duties of religion, or weakness in ourselves. Now, I cannot see in either view, such difficulties as you may apprehend in a sanctified and godly life, and I shall endeavour to press my ideas on this important subject as plainly as I can upon your minds.

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The duties which religion prescribes, in order to attain a state of sanctity and godliness; that sanctity and godliness which are essential to Christianity, and a sufficient title to the kingdom of Heaven, consist only in faithfully observing and diligently executing the law of God, as appears from the words of Jesus Christ, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*. Now, I pray you, is this a task so mighty arduous as to be deemed almost impracticable in the execution? Many thousands of our predecessors, by faithfully fulfilling the law upon Earth, have earned for themselves the glory and happiness they now possess in the realms above. Their rewards should encourage, and their example instruct us how to follow their steps. It is a melancholy truth, and I admit it, that no age, no period of the Christian æra has abounded more than the present in iniquity. Iniquity overruns the land, and by a strange depravity, vice is reduced to a system, and introduced as a fashion. If you have not heard, I have, the thoughtless beau, the young blood boast of insulting that God whom he was never seen to adore. Notwithstanding this general depravity which covers the world, a few there are, and those few consist of thousands, and those thousands are scattered over all nations, who constantly fulfil the holy laws of God. The instances are before your eyes. Our Temples bear testimony to their piety, old age and poverty to their charity, and all their transactions to the regularity of their conduct. And what can hinder you from doing what thousands have done, and what several are doing daily before your eyes? Is there any one of you but may very well, with the assistance of divine grace, pay unto the Lord the homage due unto him and his holy name; sanctify the days allotted to his worship; refrain from murder, impurity and theft; be strictly honest in all your dealings, and strictly true in all your assertions? In a word, is there any one of you but may very well, with the assistance of divine grace, keep the commandments,
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which is in reality fulfilling the whole substance of the law, and consequently attaining that degree of sanctity and holiness the law prescribes? No doubt you all can: and any doubt upon this question is a wicked suggestion of your mortal enemy, whom you are bound to resist. It has been impiously said that some of the commandments are impossible to be observed, even by the just themselves, although they should use their utmost endeavours. But this doctrine, so repugnant to faith, has been censured and condemned by the Church of Christ, as inconsistent with the principles of our religion, and the very notion we entertain of the Divinity. How is it possible to conceive, that our Heavenly Father, who is all goodness by nature, should load his servants here below, his adoptive children in Christ, the purchase of his sufferings, with a burden superior to their strength; and at the same time exact obedience at their hands, under the severest penalties, under pain of being condemned for ever to the eternal fires below? A hardship of this kind would suit the character only of the most cruel tyrant. How then can it be reconciled to the infinite justice, the tender clemency of our good God? And yet this clement and just God would necessarily lie under an imputation of this nature, if his commandments or any one of them were impossible to be fulfilled. Too injurious to his goodness would be such a reflection. He is the God of justice, and he could not command what we could not fulfil. He has commanded all to fulfil his law, under dreadful threats; all therefore can, all are bound to fulfil it by a virtuous and holy life. *Don't imagine, said Moses, that in order to keep the divine command it is necessary for you to cross the seas, or travel over the continent: or mount up to Heaven to fetch down the power of fulfilling it.* The power is near at hand: IT IS IN YOURSELF. And Christ, the eternal wisdom of God, tells you, *his yoke is sweet and his burden light.* How could these assertions hold true, if his law, which is his
yoke

yoke and burden, were impracticable, or even over-severe? Yet the law appears extremely difficult: but to whom? To your lazy, idle, vicious characters: To those who make the gratification of lawless passion, and animal sense, the whole object of their pursuits. To men who will not submit to the law, but are always acting in opposition to its holy maxims. It is not surprising that the law of Christ which is so pure as to condemn every vice, restrain every passion, and check every inordinate appetite of the soul, should appear an intolerable burden, a yoke of iron, unto persons of the most corrupt principles, and the most dissolute lives. Let such people henceforward submit to the law, and do what lies in their power to fulfil it. The grace of God will assist them; and then they will know by experience, how sweet is the yoke, and how light the burden which the law imposes: for Jesus Christ assures them, *take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls.*

No argument I can advance, to shew that the duties of the law, or if you chuse to call them, the severities of the law, form no bar to that sanctified and godly life which I so earnestly recommend, will convince; unless you possess that docility of disposition necessary to receive conviction. The duties of the law present now no greater difficulties than they did at the beginning of Christianity. What the law then was, it is now the same. The same duties it then enforced, the same rewards and threats it then held out, the same it does this day. Eternal as the God that made it: so far I mean as relates to this life; for in Heaven impeccability will supersede all law, and love and joy will reign for ever. Now, in what light was the law considered by the primitive Christians, in the early days of religion? Did they consider it presented to them difficulties too great for human nature to surmount? No. Did they capriciously set up their own judgment in determining the equity of the law of God, and seeing some things therein

of difficult practice, establish them as grounds, like modern Christians, not only for rejecting the law entirely, but for resisting and opposing that law, by daily practising every crime it condemns? Quite the reverse. So far were the primitive Christians from resisting or opposing the law, or thinking the duties of the law too severe, that by their sanctified and godly lives they edified the Church, as St. Paul testifies, and to the severity of the law, they frequently added new severities of their own. For where the law only prescribed a disinterested spirit, or enjoined them to keep their hearts disengaged from the riches of this world, they frequently gave up all they had to be distributed among the faithful. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of abnegation, or enjoined them to refrain from every unlawful pleasure, they frequently denied themselves the most innocent amusements, and condemned themselves to continual retirement and mortification. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of fidelity, or an inward disposition and willingness to forego the dearest interests of this world, rather than offend Almighty God, by transgressing any one material point of the law; they frequently courted and embraced the occasion of laying down their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ. And we shall think it a very extraordinary hardship to do what is barely prescribed by the Law. Yet we are Christians: but in manners degenerate; in conduct depraved. We dishonour the name of Christian, so long as we act in a manner unworthy of a Christian; so long as we refuse to regulate our lives by the law of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and master of every Christian. How can that law appear so severe now, in the sunshine and tranquillity of religion, which did not appear severe to the primitive Christians, amidst the most violent storms of persecution? What motives could influence their lives, and inspire them with the most heroic sentiments of religion, that do not still subsist with regard
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to us? We have the same laws, the same duties to fulfil, the same God to serve, the same rewards to hope and look for, and the same punishments to shun and avoid. Why then so much fervor and fidelity in former days, so much remissness and infidelity in ours? If by a comparison with former days it be astonishing to behold the degeneracy in ours, still more astonishing it is, that those very people who complain loudly of the severity of the law, daily undergo in the world far greater hardships than would be requisite to attain a high degree of Godliness. What station in life is exempt from difficulties; unclogged, unburthened with innumerable hardships? What toils, what dangers does not the warrior undergo in the field, in the pursuit of honor? The lawyer in quest of gain? The magistrate in discharge of his functions? The merchant in carrying on his trade? Every man in a word in his respective profession? I only speak of the elevated and prosperous stations of life. But were I to descend to the subordinate walks of life, Lord God! what toils and hardships, what sorrows and anguish would press on my view? Feuds, dissensions, quarrels and idleness; unsanctified poverty, pains and infirmity, blow up the tempest of misery which constantly agitates them. Now if these different orders of men took half the pains in fulfilling the law of God, which they take in violating it, certainly they soon would become eminent in the ways of sanctity; that degree of sanctity I mean which is essential to Christianity and a necessary title to the kingdom of Heaven. Why then will you take such pains and undergo the greatest hardships to gain a perishable crown, very often only a blast of fame and still oftener nothing at all, and take no pains to purchase the immortal Crowns of glory that are sure and certain in the kingdom of Heaven? Is the kingdom of Heaven of less consequence than the kingdom of this world? or eternal joys and glory inferior to the empty, unsatisfying, transitory gratification

of difficult practice, establish them as grounds, like modern Christians, not only for rejecting the law entirely, but for resisting and opposing that law, by daily practising every crime it condemns? Quite the reverse. So far were the primitive Christians from resisting or opposing the law, or thinking the duties of the law too severe, that by their sanctified and godly lives they edified the Church, as St. Paul testifies, and to the severity of the law, they frequently added new severities of their own. For where the law only prescribed a disinterested spirit, or enjoined them to keep their hearts disengaged from the riches of this world, they frequently gave up all they had to be distributed among the faithful. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of abnegation, or enjoined them to refrain from every unlawful pleasure, they frequently denied themselves the most innocent amusements, and condemned themselves to continual retirement and mortification. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of fidelity, or an inward disposition and willingness to forego the dearest interests of this world, rather than offend Almighty God, by transgressing any one material point of the law; they frequently courted and embraced the occasion of laying down their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ. And we shall think it a very extraordinary hardship to do what is barely prescribed by the Law. Yet we are Christians: but in manners degenerate; in conduct depraved. We dishonour the name of Christian, so long as we act in a manner unworthy of a Christian; so long as we refuse to regulate our lives by the law of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and master of every Christian. How can that law appear so severe now, in the sunshine and tranquillity of religion, which did not appear severe to the primitive Christians, amidst the most violent storms of persecution? What motives could influence their lives, and inspire them with the most heroic sentiments of religion, that do not still subsist with regard to

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fication of sense? Pursue then, the paths, I again and again charge you, which surely lead by a virtuous and holy life to the kingdom of God. Cast away the mist that obscures from your view the happiness attendant upon such a life ; for the difficulties are not so great as you might have hitherto imagined on account of the duties of religion ; neither can they be deemed extremely severe even on account of our own weakness.

I own the weakness of man is not only great but excessively great, and experience supports me in the assertion, that it is hardly in our power to know thoroughly our own weakness. Human nature has been so deeply wounded and so monstrously degraded in all her faculties, by the fall and prevarication of the first and universal parent of mankind, that we have scarcely any thing left, but ignorance, weakness and sin. Since this degradation of human nature, the understanding of Man is clouded with darkness ; but the evil stops not there ; the will is also reduced to the lowest degree of feebleness and inability. From these causes results the greatest reluctance to good, and what is equally deplorable, the strongest propensity to evil. The saints in all ages have felt and deplored the evil I now speak of. That miracle of divine Grace the great St. Paul, complains bitterly of this evil, *that inward law which rules within us, is always rebelling against the law of reason ; the law of sin, or the impulse of concupiscence (which is the effect of original sin) is continually inciting us to sin.* When we consider human nature in this light debased and weakened by original sin, we certainly have reason to be extremely diffident of ourselves, and to cry out with St. Paul, *Unhappy man ! who shall deliver me from this deplorable state ? this state of intestine war ? this state of weakness, misery, and death ?* Besides it is a point of faith that of ourselves we can do nothing with regard to Salvation. Our Saviour Jesus Christ says so, *without me you can do nothing.* And again St. Paul, *we are*
not

not sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves; but all our sufficiency is in God. This indeed is enough to sink us to the lowest degree of self-annihilation in the eyes of God. It should not however make us overlook the powerful resources we have on our side in our holy religion. For it is no less an article of Faith and an undoubted principle of religion, that with the grace of God, we can fulfil the most difficult points of the Law. *I can do all things*, St. Paul says, *in him that strengthens me. Not I alone but the grace of God with me.* Now great must be that strength and powerful that ability which we must derive from the help and assistance of Almighty God. Is there any difficulty so great, but we must conquer with his aid? No: *if God be for us who is it that can be against us?* This divine Grace or heavenly assistance is in some measure imparted unto all: for St. Paul declares, *it is the will of God that all men be saved.* Now the will of God must necessarily be effected so far as to supply all with the necessary means of Salvation; namely, with holy grace; for grace implies every aid necessary for that end. This divine grace or heavenly assistance is imparted in greater abundance to the faithful than to others. The same is laid down by St. Paul, *Christ is the redeemer of all, but most particularly of the faithful.* This divine Grace or heavenly assistance, Divines say, is always proportioned to the difficulties attendant upon the different stations of life we are called to, and engaged in, under the direction of Providence. Again, this divine Grace or heavenly assistance is always augmented in proportion to our own fidelity and fervour; as it is decreased or withdrawn in proportion to our negligence and infidelity: *He that has not* (they are the words of Christ in the Gospel) *or, he that has not made the proper use of the Grace he received shall even lose what he thinks he has: and he that has, or has made the proper use of the Grace he received, to him shall be given more.* Seeing therefore that with the

Grace of God we can fulfil the most difficult points of the law; that this Grace is imparted abundantly unto the faithful; that it is in our power by a proper application to prayer and godliness to encrease this divine Grace, and thereby enlarge our spiritual strength and ability, what excuse can any one plead for not fulfilling the law and attaining that degree of holiness the law requires? This reflection made St. Paul cry out, *O Man! thou art inexcusable for not glorifying the Almighty God, in the observation of his holy law.*

How comes it to pass that Christians feel so little and experience so seldom the influence of divine Grace? This happens either because you resist its influence (for it is in the power of man, to resist even the most powerful grace) or because Almighty God in punishment of your neglect withdraws his powerful Grace, and leaves you only such weak and feeble aids, as make little or no impression on the mind or heart. In this situation, mind this all you languid lukewarm sinners, in this situation, wherein man appears abandoned to his own weakness, every thing seems difficult, every thing hard; every temptation is yielded to, and the law remains constantly unfulfilled. Can any thing be more dreadful than a situation of this kind? There cannot undoubtedly, as it borders on reprobation, and eternal perdition. *If thine eye be dark, thy whole body must be darkened:* if the Grace of God doth not enlighten you, you can have no thought of God, no desire of Salvation, no relish for the things of Heaven. The grace of God being then the light of the Soul, as well as its strength, and the only thing that can enable us to fulfil the law of God and thereby attain that righteousness and sanctity which are requisite for life everlasting; it follows, we should dread no loss in this life, equal to the loss of this Grace, and to resolve on cherishing and improving it by a virtuous and holy life. Further, to employ the
means

means religion lays down to augment the influence of Grace, by frequent, fervent prayer, works of charity, the sacraments and most holy Sacrifice. Using these divine remedies we shall certainly receive such abundance of divine Grace as will make the most difficult observances both easy and comfortable. Covered with this armour of faith, we shall soon learn to resist the most violent temptations, elude all the wiles of the evil spirit and triumph over all the opposition of Hell. Then shall we walk with chearfulness in the most arduous paths of righteousness, till the end comes of our mortal course, when God shall call in mercy to make us partakers of the high rewards he has promised to all those (and to those alone) who lead holy and virtuous lives upon Earth—the joys and glory of his heavenly Kingdom. *Amen.*

S E R M O N V.

O N H U M I L I T Y.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18. 14.

OF all the virtues that shined in the life of Jesus Christ upon Earth, none is so conspicuous as Humility. It seems to be his darling virtue; for from his conception in the womb of his blessed Mother to the last moment of his life, he ceased not one instant to be covered with it as with a garment. Observe the obscurity of his parentage, of the manger, of his private life, of his infancy, and the humiliations of his passion. The other divine virtues whereof he is the source, he was pleased only occasionally to disclose: His wisdom among the Jewish Doctors, his power at Cana, his bounty in the desert, his charity during his public life; but humility was that virtue, which he constantly and uniformly exhibited the most brilliant example of, in his sacred person and actions for the imitation of Mankind; that virtue whereby he wished chiefly to instruct the World,---*learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* However strong the motives are for the practice of humility, from the example and instructions of Jesus Christ---from a just review of the miseries that overwhelm us---from our own essential insignificance and corruption---from our blindness, our hardness and insensibility in all those concerns that relate to our supreme and sovereign good, another motive of great magnitude is presented before you, in the promise of a God, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* He, who of himself by the co-operating

co-operating grace of Heaven, stoops down and takes up the cross, which our Saviour did before—who far from repining or swerving from his duties, under the various calamities of life beholds the finger and acknowledges the wisdom and the justice of God in every circumstance; he I say, not I, but Christ our Lord says it, *he shall be exalted*. Where? Not in this world: look for no rewards here below; for here he promises nothing to his friends but afflictions and sufferings and sorrows, *you shall weep, but the world shall rejoice*. But he tells them elsewhere, *your tears shall be wiped away. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no body shall take from you*. Now, as the afflictions of this life, according to St. Paul, are not to be compared to the glory of the next; so I maintain that humility being the foundation of a Christian life, the ground and pillar of all virtues to which Jesus Christ hath specially annexed a promise of exaltation, it follows that humility is a virtue of indispensable necessity; within the reach of each of you, my brethren, and that it gives you the strongest claim to a share in his Glory, who was the model of humility here below. This I hope to make more plain from a consideration of,

First, the motives that should inspire humility,

And, secondly, the benefits that flow from it.

But vain indeed and poor are my efforts unless thou, O Lord, lend thy aid. Open the understandings of my hearers, that seeing they may see what just causes they have for practising humility. May they sincerely begin henceforward to copy the examples of thy meekness; and grant O my God, that whilst I lay open the paths of life to those present, I may never mistake the way myself by neglecting to practice what I proclaim on your behalf to others.

First. The weakness and misery of our nature, and the command which Jesus Christ has been pleased to leave us, specially on this head, will appear I hope to every thinking person, such strong and convincing motives for the practice

of humility, that I need only lay them before you in a plain and simple manner, to induce you to the practice of that sublime virtue.

Man originally formed of common earth, inherits from nature the same imperfections of all other animals—want, weakness, disease, imbecility, death, corruption and then a return to that slime whereof he was composed. Here is no distinction. This is the lot of all; of the great and the exalted as well as the low and the humble, of the rich as the poor, of the master as the slave, of the king as the subject; all must undergo and feel those various changes, to which the sin of Adam levels them with the brute of the field. Our souls it is true raise us beyond all the visible works of the creation; but their noble faculties are obscured and darkened, more prone to error than truth, to vice than virtue. Our souls cannot convey the prerogative they possess of immortality to the body. No: *Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.* Besides the time was (a few years ago) when your souls had no existence: for it is the doctrine of the church, that the soul is created by Almighty God, as soon as the body is sufficiently organized and formed for its reception. How profound therefore and how humble should not the sentiments of every man be, when he considers that a few moments back he had no being at all, and that in a few moments forward, he will lose the life he now has? Must not a consideration of this kind satisfy any thinking man, that his body is nothing in reality but dust and ashes, and that St. Paul was very just in saying, *whoever thinks himself something deceives himself.* Let no man then say, that this compound of spirit and matter, is endowed with singular excellencies and distinguished perfections. The knowledge of what man was before the fall, should now overwhelm us with confusion. *Little inferior* was he made to the *Angels*, as the Holy Ghost speaks in the words of King David: but the sad evils that sin entailed

on

on him both in soul and body, are of the most lamentable nature ; so that now, what people often imagine and generally call perfection, is frequently no more than vice in disguise. That original probity, that virtue, that clear knowledge and pursuit of good, that unclouded perception, that simplicity of manners, that full possession of unmixt ease and happiness, which made man little less than an Angel, when he came from the hands of God, are now alas ! unknown. Could we but penetrate into the dark foldings of the hearts of those, we generally call the greatest and the best of men, Lord God ! what sentiments should we not behold ? There we should see, that what we call generosity, benevolence and true friendship, are no more than the vile counterfeits of vanity, ambition and self-interest : there we should find those great actions, which attract the applause and command the veneration of mankind, take their rise from the most corrupted sources of avarice, envy or revenge. If this be the case, as it really is, what reason have the most exalted men to boast ? On the contrary what strong motives for the most profound humility ? I will allow nevertheless that there are some men so good and upright, as to act always from the noblest principles of virtue ; for by a special providence, Almighty God has so ordered things, that good men of this description have existed, do and will exist in all ages, in all nations, and will continue to exist to the end of the world. But I would ask whence are derived those rare and happy qualifications ? from dust and ashes ? No : from thy hand, O my God, from thy fostering grace, *from whom all excellent gifts descend.* If they proceed then from the hand of God, why boast ? Why not rather feel your misery and want, and humble yourselves under them ? Besides, my brethren, be pleased to consider that this degree of excellence is confined to very few. The great bulk of mankind can boast of

nothing but imperfection and weakness; and if in their progress through life, some good qualities occasionally appear, they are generally blended with such vices or imperfections as eclipse or obscure their lustre. Their lives may be justly compared to those gloomy days, which are seldom brightened and that for a moment with the cheerful rays of the sun. For one instant of sunshine you have whole hours of obscurity—for one good quality many considerable imperfections. Seeing therefore that man possesses nothing of himself but sin and **error**, how is it possible for him to glory in his own thoughts? Should he not rather from a just contemplation of his nature, sink as it were into a kind of self-annihilation, into the most profound humility? Notwithstanding we often meet persons, so thoughtless, so inconsiderate, so full of folly, as to raise themselves in their own aspiring thoughts, above the rest of mankind. One should really imagine from their behaviour they were not formed of the same clay with their fellow creatures. Their vanity is so intolerably great, they cannot bear to hear one good word of their neighbour, but on the contrary seek every opportunity of lessening them in the eyes of the public. Should others by successful industry or casual incidents, step into a genteel light in the world; should their personal merits create and their virtues win the regard and the esteem of the public; their proud hearts are immediately alarmed and shocked, nor do they think it the least shame, to employ every mean and little art, even to become the foul organ, the vile echo, of every calumny and slander, to cast a shade over the merit of those, who prove so offensive to their malignant eyes. *Earth and dirt that thou art, what reason hast thou to pride?* This instruction the spirit of God addresses to all in general: but still I maintain, it is particularly applicable to the vain and the proud. Why so? Because they are in reality, the most contemptible part of mankind. Strip them of the ornaments

ornaments of riches, divest them of the outward shew of fortune, and you discover the basest, vilest heart; a most contemptible compound of ignorance and stupidity, envy and malice, selfishness and pride. *Let them therefore humble themselves*, as St. Paul directs, *under the powerful hand of God*; because all mankind in general has nothing to boast of, and they in particular have less reason than all the rest, to glory in themselves, destitute as they are of all sort of merit; and if rank and distinction were always the reward of merit and virtue, those I am speaking of would certainly be placed at the tail of mankind. Such are the just and humble sentiments of humility which a perfect knowledge of ourselves should inspire us with. But what should contribute more effectually to that purpose is the command which Jesus Christ has left us upon this head.

Were man left to himself he would hardly think of fixing his attention upon, and taking a near view of his own littleness and misery; because a contemplation of this kind must necessarily be disagreeable to that self-love which is born with us and seems to be interwoven with our nature. But when Almighty God commands us to study and to know ourselves, in order by consequence to entertain a correct and humble opinion of ourselves, it follows that neither self-love or in-born pride, can set up either excuse or evasion to this solemn command. Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, who had the Salvation of Mankind in view, in every word and action of his upon Earth; addressing his disciples (that is you and me, and the Christians of all nations and of all times, who look up to the rewards of Heaven) says unto them; *Learn of me*, not to create the Heavens or the earth; not to remove mountains and cast them into the sea, not to perform any other prodigy of nature, but (observe the command you are bound to learn) *that I am meek and humble of heart*. Humility therefore will always be the distinguishing character

character of the true disciples of Christ. Without humility you do not *learn* of Christ: you copy not his footsteps, and unless you copy his footsteps, you can have no claim to life everlasting. The importance of this virtue, my Brethren, may be seen, from its constant exemplification in the sacred person of our Redeemer, as well as the various occasions wherein he instructs his followers on this head: *Amen I say unto you, unless you become as little children, how so?—meek and humble like little children—you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* At another time; *when thou shalt be called to a wedding, take thy seat in the last place.* Again, *He that wishes to be greatest amongst you, let him become a servant to the rest.* Finally, Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God and your model, of whom St. Paul says, *He humbled himself as it were to nothing, by taking upon him the figure of a slave: this God I say, closes his last intercourse with his disciples, before his death, with a most pressing exhortation to humility, and he grounds it on a most singular example; if I who am your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash the feet of each other: for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also may do the like.*

The obligation and the practice of humility being made clear from the authority of Holy-writ, and enforced by the example of Jesus Christ, we are naturally led to the consideration of what humility consists in—a question of no small nicety. The doctors of the Church and writers upon a spiritual life, have almost all varied in opinion upon the question, what humility consisted in? some will have it, that humility consists in a thorough knowledge of ourselves and our natural insignificance: others, in shunning and despising all honor and distinction before men; whilst others suppose it to consist in seeking for humiliation and abjection. But in the views of men of the nicest conceptions and most correct way of thinking, those different
 opinions

opinions appear no more than the marks or external effects of humility. Humility therefore in their judgment, consists in a habitual disposition of the mind, of paying the Almighty God, the honor due to his supreme greatness, so as never to transgress or omit any part of our duty, from a regard to the vain glory of this world: For he that knows the supreme greatness of God, must certainly see, how little there is in the whole creation besides; and he that sees this, and is governed by this inward principle, so far as to pay the just regard to the greatness of God upon every occasion, is truly and sincerely humble. From this exposition follow three degrees of humility: the first, to know and acknowledge inwardly, in the sight of God, that of ourselves we are nothing; the second, never to violate any essential part of our duty, either through the fear of contempt or a desire of distinction; the third, to despise ourselves and wish to be despised by others—not only to bear with, but even seek and rejoice in the occasions of being contemned and despised by others. The first and second degrees are absolutely necessary for salvation: the last concerns those alone, who aspire to a higher degree of perfection. You all perceive, my Brethren, from what I have said, the necessity of fulfilling the essential and necessary parts of humility; that is, to think little of yourselves, in the sight of God and in the sight of Man; and if any perfections you may have (for perfections there are, and distinguished perfections both of body and mind) to acknowledge them as the gifts of Heaven; and that the more we receive the more accountable we shall be unto Almighty God. Did we act universally in this manner, we should be strangers to that vanity and arrogance which seem to over-rule every condition of life. Then, we should never see those blessed with excellent and shining parts, running down those that have scarcely any, because they would, as they should,

should, consider, that no man is truly great, but in the eyes of God; and that talents misapplied, are much inferior to that simplicity which sanctifies the heart without swelling or puffing up the mind. Then, we should never see the superior ranks in life, looking down with disdain on the inferior; because they would, as they should, consider that no one is truly rich or elevated but in grace or virtue; and that gold which now creates the distinction is no more than painted dirt, which were it to pass into hands they now look down on, would perhaps create more honor and applause than they ever were, or ever will be held in. Then, in a word, every man would know himself: the ignorant, their ignorance, the proud, their folly, the weak and imperfect, their weakness and imperfection. Mankind would know, that all excellency is derived from above, and should always be referred unto God; so as never to *seek their own glory to the prejudice of the glory of Christ*. Then likewise should we all reap the precious advantages which flow from the practice of Humility. What those advantages are, shall be the subject of the second part of this discourse.

II. The Spirit of God directs, *the greater thou art, humble thyself the more*; whereby you shall obtain two great advantages,---honour before man, and grace before God. When I speak of honour as a sure and constant attendant upon humility, I don't mean that vain and false honour which consists in the esteem and applause of sinners, and is generally bestowed upon the most undeserving men.---No: this is rather a humiliation than a real honour: because no wise or virtuous man thinks it the least credit to be high in the esteem of those, who are not only vicious and profligate in themselves, but also the zealous patrons and abettors of the vices and profligacy of others. True honour consists in the esteem, good opinion, and applause of all wise, honest, and righteous men.---It consists in the approbation of Almighty God: for St. Paul says,

says, *it is not he that commends himself, that is to be approved or applauded, but he whom God commends.* The rest is no more than a vain and empty shew of distinction---all *flesh being as grass, and its glory as the flowers of the field.* True honour, therefore; that honour which ranks us, first, high before man---and, secondly, supremely high before God, must proceed from humility: for the Spirit of God says, *honour and glory shall march before the humble man*; and our Lord Jesus Christ declares, *that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

Who are they that acquire honour, and meet with regard and distinction from all knowing and upright men? Are they not persons of a modest and humble deportment? What veneration is paid the man of wealth, who, overlooking the distance that fortune or custom has placed between him and the rest of mankind, shews, upon every occasion, that he knows how to distinguish and revere the Christian, even in the most lowly conditions of life! A man of this character, does he not acquire high honour before men? for even in this life *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* A man of distinguished parts, who, at the same time that he is conscious of his merit, *glories in no other knowledge than the knowledge of Christ*; who constantly devotes to the public good those talents which a vain and interested heart generally directs to private interest or empty applause: is he not, I say, revered, commended, and highly honoured by mankind? for even in this life *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* How venerable is that young person, who, unmindful of the graces that adorn her, never sees or notices any imperfections in others; on the contrary, takes every opportunity of setting forth their good qualities in the fairest view, and glossing over the imperfections of the body by the perfections of the mind---Is not one of this character extolled high before mankind? for even in this life *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* On the contrary in what light are those considered who are
eternally

eternally raising themselves above their fellow creatures? Are they not the scorn---the contempt of mankind? The higher they rise in their own towering imaginations, the lower they are depressed by all those that know their haughtiness and pride. Even Divine Providence interferes to pull down the gigantic pride and arrogance of those vain and ambitious minds, who are continually raising in their own thoughts a structure capable of reaching the highest Heavens. Thus our Saviour says, in the Gospel, *He that exalteth himself shall be humbled.* And honour and glory, says St. Paul, *belong to God alone*: He cannot bear to see a vile, despicable insect encroaching on his rights and usurping his prerogatives; like Lucifer, that head of the reprov'd angels, who would fain soar to the throne of God, and make himself like the Most High. But as God cannot bear such usurpation, he never fails to bring about such changes and revolutions, as must level the proud heart in humiliation, and cover it with confusion. Does not daily experience furnish you all with proofs of the justice of this remark? Have you ever known any of those who are constantly undervaluing or ridiculing their neighbours, but met with some disgrace, some misfortune, that touched them in the most delicate spot,---their honour? Disgrace here, or misfortune, is always conducted by the unerring hand of God, who will always, and on all occasions, make good his word,---*He that exalteth himself shall be humbled.* If, therefore, you wish to avoid the dreadful humiliations of the heavy hand of God, be humble yourselves in your thoughts, in your expressions, and deportment; whereby you will not only obtain honour before man, but grace before God.

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, says St. James: graces of forgiveness, and graces of improvement in sanctity and merit. I say graces of forgiveness, which you all know to be

be verified by the whole history of the Jewish people, who always removed the anger and scourges of Heaven by their humiliations alone. There never was, nor ever will be, so effectual a method of removing the anger of God, as humility; because *a contrite and humble heart, O God! thou wilt not despise*; which you shall see exemplified in a few instances. King David, who sinned and transgressed the law, was confident of mercy, so soon as he humbled and reduced himself to that state which gives all glory unto God and prepares the way for the execution of his mercies. He therefore beseeches the Lord *to look down upon his humility*. He calls not in vain: The Lord beheld and forgave him. Achab, one of the most unjust and unrighteous princes that ever sat upon the throne of Israel; after his injustices and violence were carried to the highest, the Lord sent his Prophet to tell him, he took notice of his iniquities, and resolved to punish him. Achab, terrified at this notice, covered himself with sack-cloth, and humbled himself exceedingly.—Behold! The Almighty speaks to his Prophet a second time: *Hast thou not seen Achab humbled in my sight?*—Observe: *Because Achab hath humbled himself before me, I will not pour down upon him the evils I mentioned*. Here humility stops the uplifted hand of God, at least for a time. Manasses, one of the most wicked princes that ever disgraced the throne of Juda, whose iniquities forced the Almighty to punish and chastise him severely, in allowing the Assyrian to drag him to Babylon ignominiously bound in iron chains; yet by humbling himself under the powerful hand of God, was afterwards restored to his kingdom and the splendor of his former reign. The impious and insolent Nabuchodonosor, after being reduced by Almighty God to the level of a beast, and living and sleeping on the grass of the forest for seven years, in common with the cattle; yet upon acknowledging, in the midst of his humiliations, the powerful and supreme justice of the omnipotent

omnipotent God, was thereupon raised again to the glory and elevation of the most powerful monarchs of the East. If from the old, we pass to the new law, we shall find, in one place, Mary Magdalen, a woman notorious for her sins, receiving full forgiveness from the lips of Jesus Christ himself: but in what circumstances?---After humbling herself to the lowest degree, casting herself down at the feet of our Saviour, in a public and genteel company, bathing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. In another place, a publican, or tax-gatherer---one by his profession liable to the greatest injustices---descends from the Temple justified.---Upon what occasion? After he had humbled himself to the ground in the lower part of the Temple, thinking himself unworthy of advancing, or even of lifting up his eyes unto God. In a word, if we consult the whole system of religion, we shall find it filled with assurances and examples of the surprising effects of humility, not only in drawing down the grace of forgiveness, but likewise the grace of improvement in sanctity and merit.

This, my brethren, is a necessary consequence, from the nature and excellence of humility; as it is an undoubted principle of our religion, that the more excellent any act of virtue is, the more productive it is of grace. Now, that humility is a virtue of the most excellent kind, appears, not only from the illustrations I have given it from the old and new Law, but also from the Fathers. St. Cyprian, in his Sermon upon the Nativity, calls it the root and foundation of all virtues. It is impossible to rise to the higher degrees, says St. Chrysostom, without passing first thro' the lower, which consist in humility. It is not only the foundation, but the perfection of virtue, according to St. Austin, who beautifully compares it to a grand and stately edifice, which rises high in proportion as the foundation is laid low---so that virtue always increases in proportion to our humility; whereas
if

if the foundation be deficient, the whole superstructure must necessarily fall to the ground. The same holy father and doctor of the Church goes further: In his 56th Epistle he proposes and answers the following important questions: What is the first thing in all religion? Humility.—What the second? Humility.—What the third? Humility. As if the greatest virtues religion prescribes were reducable to this one point—humility. This will appear no way surprising, if we consider the great and extensive influence of humility. Other virtues are limited in their nature, and confined to certain particular effects.—Sobriety, for instance, regulates our actions only with regard to food; justice, with regard to property; liberality, with regard to riches; modesty, with regard to dress; but humility takes in every thing, as it subjects the whole soul unto God. It makes us consider the Divinity as *All in All*, and pay unto him the honour due to his supreme greatness, in every action and circumstance of life; whence it becomes a virtue of the first and most excellent class. This being established and admitted, how much must the practice of it be profitable to the soul, and productive of divine grace? The holy Fathers, to express their ideas of the benefits of humility, use a figure, and compare it to those fruitful valleys which are fertilized and enlivened by the refreshing dew, the vivifying rain, and all the kind influence of the skies; whilst the lofty hills are dried up by a burning sun and parching winds, and thereby reduced to a miserable state of sterility. Besides, humility has ever been the favourite virtue of the Saints. I will go further, and say, that no one was ever remarkable for sanctity, that was not equally so for humility. The more the Almighty rewarded their merit with grace, the more they sunk and depressed themselves in his sight; not only avoiding every shadow of applause, by concealing all their good works, but wishing, if possible, to conceal them from

from themselves. Jesus Christ, who sees in private, will reward in public, and will manifest, by miracles, the concealed humiliations of his servants, as he did the hermit Paul in the desert, and Mary in Egypt.

Having thus shewn you the necessity, the excellency, and the advantages of humility, it remains only that we draw a just consequence from the whole. We are all sinners. We all stand in need of the mercies of the Lord. Without his mercies we shall all be lost. Humility, as you have seen, is the most powerful means of drawing down those mercies. Let no day, therefore, pass, during your short pilgrimage here below, without practising one or more acts of humility. Humility is of two sorts: of the mind and body. That of the mind is more acceptable: silence when thwarted or contradicted, even though you should be right; meekness under sufferings, because sufferings are due to sin; but take care that every act of humility be conformable to, and grounded on, the spirit of religion. It is religion tells you, that *Empire, and Power, and Glory belong to God alone*. Let us publicly confess before Heaven and Earth, that we are miserable, sinful creatures; incapable of all good, oppressed with sin and imperfection, unworthy all notice, and deserving the highest contempt and humiliation.

Such sentiments often felt, often repeated, will excite the notice and call forth the mercies of the Great Eternal God; and from being humble upon earth, he will raise you to greatness in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N VI.

ON FORGIVENESS.

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 Qui autem dixerit, fatue, reus erit gehennæ ignis.

*Whoever shall say, thou fool, shall be guilty of hell-fire.*  
 Mat. c. 5, v. 22.

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THE relation that man stands in with regard to man, the ties that connect him with his brethren, as being the images of God, members of Christ, enlightened with the same faith, and called to the same hopes of eternal happiness; are such as not only to demand our best offices, but oblige us to treat our brother with a certain deference, were he the meanest of mankind; *to prevent each other with honour*, as St. Paul directs; and even to love him, according to the new and favourite command of Jesus Christ our Lord: for without the love of our brethren we cannot love God; and unless we love God, we can have no claim to life everlasting. But that we should be excluded the kingdom of Heaven, and condemned to Hell-fire, for using contemptuous language, may appear very surprising to many not well grounded in the principles of religion: that a wayward and angry expression—*whoever shall say thou fool*—should be followed by such fatal consequences, is infallibly true, because the Gospel assures us, *he shall be guilty of hell-fire*. To be, then, so far forgetful of your duty, as to break out into expressions of real anger or contempt against your neighbour, is to dissolve the bonds of charity, to violate the first obligation of the law, and to become liable to all the wrath and vengeance of God. This principle is not only
 true

true with regard to our brethren in general, it extends likewise to our most bitter and implacable enemies, as appears from the Gospel whence I have selected the foregoing text as the subject of your instruction this evening, where our Saviour orders us, *to leave our gift at the altar, and go and be reconciled to our brother.* Without this reconciliation or forgiveness, all your prayers, all your alms, all your good works, will avail you nought before God: for *he that loveth not his brother*, says St. Paul, *remaineth in death*; that is, is cut off from the joys of life everlasting. This weighty, material point, how few are there who seriously take it into consideration! Most people conceive themselves warranted in returning hatred for hatred, blow for blow; hence those feuds, animosities, and dissensions which tear up the mystical garb of Christ, I mean the society of the faithful all over the Christian world. If we consult the Gospel, we shall find the obligation we lie under of loving our very enemies, as well as forgiving them; but lest the subject become too copious, we shall for the present separate them, and examine,

First, the strictness of the law which enjoins forgiveness, and

Secondly, the duties it prescribes.

Eternal Wisdom of my God! whose forgiveness and mercies are thy brightest attributes, enable thy servant to teach those present the ways of forgiveness; and whilst I teach, do thou touch their hearts with that brilliant example of forgiveness which you held forth from the Cross.

I. What can be more binding, my brethren, than an obligation enforced by divine authority, which extends to every rank and station of life, and is not to be dispensed with in any circumstance, or for any consideration whatsoever? Now this is precisely the nature of the obligation of forgiveness. The Almighty God orders us to forgive: he orders it without exception of persons, and in such a manner as to admit neither of alleviation or
excuse.

excuse. If you only love those that love you, and do good only to repay acts of benevolence, what more do you do than the Pagans, who, from a principle of gratitude engrafted in our nature, are never wanting in expressions of kindness towards those who have conferred any obligations upon them? *I say unto you, love your enemies*—they are the words of a God; *do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and despise you.*—Mat. 6. This is not one of those counsels which our Saviour recommended to his Disciples for their greater perfection, and may be neglected without a breach of the Law, or incurring his displeasure—(as when he recommends letting our cloak go, when a man attempts taking it by force; or to turn the left cheek, when we are struck upon the right; although one may very lawfully sue in justice for his property, and forcibly repel any violence, provided it be done with due moderation).—No: the obligation of loving our enemies is not one of these counsels, but a most formal and rigorous precept, the violation of which is necessarily attended with a grievous offence against the Divinity; and behold the consequence, *If ye do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins.* As we can never aspire to eternal happiness without the forgiveness of our sins, and that the Word of God here assures us we never will be forgiven unless we forgive, it follows, that to refuse complying with this precept, is a capital transgression of the Law, since that alone is sufficient to exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven. How deplorable, then, is the condition of those who obstinately refuse to be reconciled to their enemies, and sincerely forgive the injuries they had received! Whilst they remain in this disposition, nothing can be more true, than that they can have no part with Christ, no share in his kingdom; for he says, *there is no mercy for those who shew no mercy to others.* It is related in the Gospel, of a certain servant who owed a considerable debt to his master,

and,

and, upon application for indulgence, the master most generously and tenderly forgave the whole debt.---Some small debts had been owing to this servant; these he shortly afterwards applies for; but he applies with urgency, with sternness and cruelty, unmindful of the indigence and misery of his debtors. This barbarous oppression could not remain concealed: it spread about, and reached the master's ears. Justly astonished at such unheard-of oppression, he sends for this cruel servant, reproaches him with his inhumanity, which received a new aggravation from the indulgence he had met with himself, and orders him instantly to be cast into prison, until he pays the entire debt. The application of this parable is obvious:--We all stand deep debtors unto Almighty God, on the score of our manifold sins and daily transgressions; these his infinite mercy is pleased to forgive--at least is ready to forgive, provided we call on him with humility and compunction--and yet, to the disgrace of Christianity and of human nature, there shall be found a man, I mean a vile insect, a contemptible worm, who refuses to forgive his brother a trifling debt, a feather, if rightly weighed, in comparison of the heavy debts that have been remitted him. Strange infatuation! Blind corruption of the human heart! But observe the consequence: learn it from the words of your Redeemer, and tremble at the instruction: This unrelenting man will be cast into the dark prison of Hell, until he pays the last farthing; that is, until the inflexible wrath of Heaven is satisfied, by his endless and interminable sufferings. Say, thou man of nice honour, of tender feelings; say thou compound of pride and passion, have you ever seriously reflected on this subject? To remove the weighty considerations that arise from religion, say, have you weighed in the balance of reason and of self-interest, what it is, by unforgiveness, to provoke, to dare, to defy the avenging justice of God, rather than suppress your resentments? Do you
prefer

prefer descending into the black and burning lake of Hell, drawn down by your desires of revenge, rather than occupy a place among the saints, raised up by the god-like virtue of forgiveness? Such considerations, I hope, fill you with a holy horror. Let them serve to suppress, at least to cool, your resentments, and prepare your souls for the mild and peaceable dispositions that religion inspires. Otherwise you transgress an obligation enforced by divine authority, and in such a manner as not to admit of exception or excuse.

A man bent upon revenge is always ready, with a number of plausible reasons, to justify his conduct. Listen, and observe the imposing air of sincerity with which he speaks: "I am not one of those touchy, over-nice persons, who are piqued at every trifle, and make a mountain of a pebble; but the injury I received is too serious to be overlooked: I was injured in the broad light of day, in the face of the public, by an inferior. Every man of either rank or distinction, must support a character, otherwise he sinks into disrepute, if not contempt. I owe a debt of justice to myself, which compels me to retaliate this injury." Fine words, my brethren! Let us examine and weigh them in the scales of the sanctuary. The injury was too serious to be overlooked. What was the injury? An unguarded expression, a disrespectful look perhaps. And is this sufficient cause for you, O revengeful man! to vomit out invectives against your neighbour? to vilify and asperse him? to injure and insult him? to attempt and bring about his ruin? When the principles of reason and of religion become shipwrecked by such conduct as this, in vain do I ask where your faith is, your hopes of future mercies, or your charity. Had you even the power (I mean not the ability, but the right) of punishing, which you really have not, surely punishment should be proportioned to the fault; and what proportion, what justice is maintained between the injury you

pretend to have received, and the animosity you express? But admitting the injury to be great as you conceive it, and levelled with the blackest designs, does it follow from thence that you have a right to let loose your resentments, and pursue them at full liberty? No, my brethren; Almighty God has reserved that right to himself alone.—*Revenge unto me*, says the Lord, by the pen of King David,—*I shall return it*: so that whoever undertakes to redress his own private wrongs, usurps a Divine right, which must necessarily draw down the heavy judgments and provoke the anger of an offended God. Every man having an undoubted right to his property, his character, and fame, I confess without any difficulty, that every man who is injured may lawfully sue for an adequate reparation in justice; but, I say, it must be without rancour or spleen, leaving the determination to those whom God has appointed and entrusted with his power to govern and protect us; and in cases where justice cannot be obtained, you are bound to commit the decision to God alone, at whose tribunal all injustice must necessarily be tried and condemned. “But can a man of rank, distinction, and character bear a public insult?” Jesus Christ will answer that question. Supreme in rank and distinction; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; before whom, and in whose hands, the whole world, and all the worlds that swim in the vast and immeasurable regions of space, are only as one drop of water; behold him in Jerusalem, buffeted, spit upon, insulted, and abused, by all the ruffians of the Jewish rabble: silent under their calumnies, patient under their blows, and their advocate for forgiveness with his Father on the cross. He was a God, you’ll say: he was, I answer, and by that title possessed the power, as well as the right, to inflict on his enemies the most exemplary punishments.—And yet how great was his charity, his forgiveness, to his most bitter enemies! Who can pretend to
greater

greater distinction than David? He was most injuriously treated by Saul, after delivering his country from the invading foe, and fixing the crown, that was tottering, upon his head; and yet he never attempted to be revenged for all the injuries he underwent. "But a man of character to be insulted?"—What character? Is not a disciple of Christ your first character? As such, you are bound to practice his law and copy his example.—What law; what example?—Forgiveness. But a man forfeits his honour who pockets an affront.—Among the ignorant, the foolish, the unthinking part of mankind, he may; among those who have no proper notion of equity or justice, clemency or goodness; and who should be ambitious of their esteem? But the good, the wise, and the virtuous will highly honour and applaud him who overlooks and passes by an injury. The most pusillanimous, when worked upon by rage or fear of infamy, will attempt any danger; but a heroic spirit alone can forgive. True courage consists not in opposing all laws, divine and human; but in despising danger in a rational cause, where our religion or our country demand our services; in faithfully adhering to our duty, notwithstanding the censure or the contempt of mankind. "But a man's honour!"—What plea will honour make for you at the bar of God's justice? It is much better, in an affair of this nature, to incur dishonour before man, than reproof and condemnation before God. *If God be for us*, says St. Paul, *who is against us?* And I say, if God be against you, who is for you? What protection or shelter can you find in the vain applause of man, against the flaming effusions of an angry God? How shall they protect you in that dreadful future day, when in vain the hills and mountains shall be invoked to cover the sinner; when, as he declares himself, he will deal out judgment without mercy against all those who show no mercy to others. These are the words of an omnipotent God, who, from an essential regard to his

excellence and greatness, cannot overlook the violation of his law; and from his innate justice cannot but punish it in the most dreadful manner. To whom did God speak thus?—To you and to me; to all who profess themselves his disciples: and this denunciation extends to every situation and circumstance in life. The obligation of forgiveness cannot be dispensed with, in any rank or condition, under pain of forfeiting all claim to life everlasting. The duties it prescribes, come next under consideration in the sequel of this discourse.

II. Notwithstanding the great depravity of morals among the Christians of our days, few there are, who publicly refuse complying with the law of forgiveness. Men of bitter dispositions, do not hesitate to acknowledge the force of the obligation, and assert that they really and sincerely do forgive their enemies. But a fatal error lies under this exterior cloak, this shadow of forgiveness. From the obligation of forgiveness, two branches arise, one relating to the interior, the other the exterior; one touching the mind, the other the body; by the one, we are obliged to wish our enemies well, *diligite inimicos*; by the other, to do them positive good, when occasion requires; two important considerations, which call for your most serious attention.

I say in the first place, and it is plain from the nature of things, that in consequence of the love we owe our enemies, we are bound not to wish them harm; because according to the received opinion of mankind, love and hatred, respecting the same object, cannot dwell together in the same breast. Whoever therefore pretends to forgive as Christ commands, *dimittite*, must not only discharge from the heart hatred; but furnish it with a Christian love; a love that not only prompts to action, but removes and banishes every sentiment that has the least tendency to the prejudice of your neighbour. Now let me ask
you,



you, who is it forgives in this manner? Consult your own experience, and you observe this and that person; whom you know to be greatly wronged or oppressed; and you admire their magnanimous virtue, in forgiving this enemy, that oppressor. But follow them into private life, and observe them in every company, by bitter invectives, and keen reproaches; by lively representations, perhaps false colourings of the injuries, they sustained themselves, as well as others, contradict by their actions, the false appearance of forgiveness they held forth. Observe their secret triumphs, their cruel joys, upon occasion of this calamity, that ruin; and tell me, is this forgiveness? No, my brethren; they never forgave. They only disguised their resentments; not removed them as they should; otherwise they would be very far from shewing any animosity in their words or countenance, whenever any enemy of theirs is made the object of discourse. *True charity is bountiful*, says St. Paul, *it knows not how to act amiss*. Forgiveness is the daughter of Charity. Whoever forgives not, transgresses the law of Charity, because charity is merciful, and mercy is forgiving. Let us look a little farther, and behold others on their knees, after receiving the slightest injury, loading their enemies with imprecations and curses, and calling aloud with extended arms, not for mercy, but that the curses and vengeance of God, may light upon their enemies! Almighty God! before whom the pillars of Heaven tremble with awe, stop thine ear and shut thy hand, when unhappy mortals thus presume to speak! Such unhappy wretches should know that their curses will only fall on themselves, for their impiety: for what greater affront could be offered unto God, than that his thunderbolts should await their commands, and that his power and justice should be employed in seconding the malice of their hearts? It is upon those occasions we may safely say, Almighty

God never hears the petitions of sinners; or if he should, it is only to pour down on their guilty heads, the vengeance they require for others. Almighty God may and will punish it is true, but it is when and in what manner he chuses, not conformable to your wicked or malicious desires. You have been wronged you say, and destroyed. Could your curses remove those wrongs, or recal destruction? I will admit he wronged you. Are you therefore to wrong, to destroy your own soul, by a most grievous iniquity? Had you sacrificed your wrongs and your resentment (and a sacrifice of sweet favor they would be) unto the Lord, he in his own time would certainly have done you justice; but by your unchristian manner of abominable imprecation, you have forfeited the merit of forbearance in this life, and its reward in the next. But you forgave when your passion cooled. This will not wipe away, or extenuate the crime you committed in your passion. My dear Brethren, you should never allow your passion to inflame you with such rage, as to break out into any scandalous expressions of revenge. It has come to the lot of very few I know, to be such masters of their hearts, as to suppress the first emotions of anger, upon receiving any considerable injury; but I equally know, it is still in our power, with the assistance of Heaven, so to check these emotions, as by degrees to suppress them entirely. Upon those occasions, it is in our power to beg of the great God, the grace to master our passions, which he will not refuse to such as call for it with humility and fervour. The fatal error lies, in neglecting in such cases, to bridle our unruly passions, and applying above for aid, where aid would certainly be found. Upon the whole it follows, that if any one wishes another deliberately, any considerable harm, either in or out of passion; such person dissolves the great law of Charity, the favourite law of Christ, for which at his awful tribunal,

tribunal, he shall certainly undergo a severe judgment. To discharge therefore your duty, either with regard to those who have been your enemies heretofore, or who may be so hereafter, you must take special care, so to watch over the sentiments of your mind, as never to intend or wish them any harm or prejudice. Even here you must not stop: you are obliged to do them positive good when occasion requires.

This obligation arises clearly from the sermon preached by our Lord Jesus Christ on the Mountain, *do good to those that offend you, pray for those that persecute you.* To forgive therefore is not enough: To wish your enemies well is not even sufficient. You must do your enemy positive good, when occasion requires; otherwise you make sterile the new and favourite precept of our Lord, *love your enemies*; a precept he honoured with the special dignity of calling it his own; and a precept whereby Christians were to be distinguished from all the other inhabitants of the Earth. This great and important precept, is not to be confined to the cold and languid operations of the mind. No: it must arise into action. You must love your enemies as Christ loved you. Consider the love he was graciously pleased to shew us. It consisted not merely in declining to punish us as we deserved, but it was productive of the greatest blessings; since it was his love, that made him offer himself up a victim to his father, and become a ransom for our sins upon the cross. If then you forgive your enemies as you ought, you will forgive them as Christ forgave us; not in words but in effect, by doing them positive good. To illustrate this point, Divines distinguish two sorts of offices; the common civilities in society which every citizen has a right to expect from his fellow-citizen; every friend from a friend, every relation from a relation, every Christian from a Christian; and they add, that every one is obliged in conscience,

not only to shew those usual civilities even to an enemy, but to use the particular expressions of friendship; so that any one, who refuses to speak to his enemy when spoken to, to return the salute when saluted; or excludes himself from any share in his prayers or alms, must be guilty of a heinous violation of the divine law, which obliges us to love our enemies as Jesus Christ loved us. Further they say, there are many occasions, wherein we are obliged to go beyond these outward expressions; to treat our enemies with the most sincere and effectual benevolence, so as to assist them either with our counsel or fortune, and as often as they stand in need of it; because it would be the greatest enormity for a man, who professes himself a disciple of Christ, to see his fellow-creature perish, for want either of his advice or assistance, merely because he had offended him. Finally they assure us that in many cases we are bound to prevent our enemies with friendship; and this is always the case—the bounden duty of the aggressor; which though a point of the utmost importance, is very little attended to in several circumstances of life. Often do we behold severe indignities offered both in public, and in private; yet the aggressors rest contented without feeling the force of the obligation they lie under. Their pride, or a certain distinction, which they occupy no where but in their own ideas, will not allow them to step forward and make advances towards a reconciliation: but be it known, that without this, Almighty God will never be reconciled unto them. The injured persons, my brethren, do not precisely lie under the same obligations as the injurers. Those have a right to receive, these to make the reparation. Charity is not inconsistent with justice; it heightens, not destroys it: so that whoever injures first, should be first to repair the injury. This obligation is so strict in the opinion of Divines, that none can be admitted to the holy Sacrament, who refuses to comply therewith.

with. There are occasions, I know, wherein the person injured is obliged to forego his rights; but that is when it becomes necessary to prevent the great scandal that must ensue from insisting upon a reparation, or where a prospect arises of gaining over to Jesus Christ, a brother, who must otherwise perish thro' a rash, headstrong, and ungovernable temper. Here is the law, and the distinctions of the law for you, in their full extent. It remains only to be considered, how the law has been fulfilled hitherto. Examine, and let me ask, in what manner have each of you been disposed towards your enemies heretofore? Have you sincerely forgiven—have you loved them as Jesus Christ commands; so as neither to wish, nor do them any harm; to pay them the common duties of social and christian life, and even to serve them upon necessary occasions? How are you now disposed, with regard to them? Do you sincerely forgive them from your hearts? Go then at the end of this sermon, go and be reconciled to your enemies if any you have. Blind and corrupt nature may feel the humiliation, the recollection of past grievances may revive, and resentments become inflamed at the thought; but consider, it is a God that commands it, and that your salvation or eternal perdition, depends on your obedience or resistance. Once more I say, go and salute your enemy. He is your brother in Christ. Frail clay, once has he offended—often have you offended the great Being of Heaven. Unless you forgive, how can you say, *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*, because by those words, you defy the anger of God and invoke his thunder-bolts on your guilty heads. The words are, *forgive us only as we forgive*; As we forgive not, do not thou forgive; but if we forgive others, do thou forgive us. *I will*, says the Lord. No longer then, shall injuries or the recollection of them dwell with us. Let the ignorance of our duties, O Lord, plead some

excuse for the past, *for they knew not what they did.* Fully sensible now of thy law, we sincerely forgive all the injuries we ever received, and aided by thy grace, we purpose to bear up with meekness, as you did on the cross, with whatever injuries may be offered to us here below—to receive them as chastisements from thy fatherly hands, to the end, that living here in the bonds of charity with mankind, we may all one day for ever praise you, in the enjoyment of your *great rewards* in the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N VII.

O N G R A C E.

*I give thanks to my God always on your behalf, for
the Grace of God which is given you through Jesus
Christ.*

1 Cor. ch. 1, v. 4.

IF the Apostle was so mindful of returning the Almighty continual thanks for the favours he was pleased to bestow on those that had been converted to the faith of Christ, it is not to be supposed he could have been any way unmindful of the blessings he had himself received. The various graces he had been favoured and adorned with must undoubtedly have been always present to his thoughts, especially as many of them were of the most high and distinguished nature that could possibly be thought of. Favours of such high and distinguished excellence are not indifferently granted to all men. *The grace of God is manifold*, says St. Peter; nor is it distributed alike to all persons; and according to St. Paul, *Grace is given to every one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ*. Grace, therefore, being various—to some more, to others less—it is a certain principle, that he who has received even the least, lies under the greatest obligations: For what obligations are not due for the immense and incomprehensible riches contained in our redemption, in our sanctification, in the remission of sin, and our frequent returns unto Almighty God? Is there any one moment of our lives not in some measure marked by the grace of God? Yet how few who ever make these manifold blessings the subject of gratitude, or even of serious reflection!

reflection! Many there are unacquainted even with the nature of divine grace, others continually abuse it: I conceive it, therefore, a subject of vast importance to your instruction, to your improvement and edification, to consider divine grace in its nature and effect; because the contemplation of grace, as a divine virtue coming from the hand of God, the fountain of all virtue, will become instructive, on the one hand, whilst its effects may animate you to the practice of virtue, on the other. In the

First part, you shall behold the nature and excellence of divine grace; in the

Second, the obligations it lays us under.

In both, whilst I strive to inform the mind, I wish to touch the heart. But what can I do, O God! without the powerful influence of thy holy grace? O let it dwell and enlighten our conduct during our pilgrimage here below; let it point the way out to thy servants here assembled, that knowing you, they may increase in thy love; and loving you, they may merit a daily increase of thy holy grace.

I. Grace in general, may be considered as a supernatural assistance which Almighty God grants us through the merits of Jesus Christ, to strengthen our natural weakness, and enable us to work our salvation. Divine Grace is of two sorts, habitual and actual. Habitual grace, is that which resides in the soul of every just man, whilst he continues faithful unto God; and actual grace, that which does not reside in the soul for any continuance, but only during the time of its operation. The excellence of divine grace is indeed so very great, that it can hardly be conceived by man, being of a supernatural order; whence it follows, that the most valuable things we can discover here below, such as riches, honours, knowledge, or pleasure, are all, as being in the order of nature, of an inferior rank, and, of course, not to be compared to grace, which is of the supernatural kind. As
much

much, then, as the order of grace is above the order of nature, so much is divine grace, or the very least portion thereof, as Divines say, beyond all the wealth or imaginary greatness of this world. Nor can it be otherwise, my brethren, from the very nature of things, divine grace being the fruits of the death and passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according to St. John: *the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth were brought by Jesus Christ.* Should I ask to whom this divine grace is imparted? the answer is clear:—to the friends of God; to those who, by co-operating with its influence, render themselves favourites of God; to those, as St. John says, *who love him, and are equally loved by him and his heavenly Father.* The gifts of nature he bestows upon all indifferently, *making the sun to shine, and the rain to pour down, at stated times, upon the just and the unjust,* as Christ himself says, in the Gospel; but his sanctifying grace is given to the just and good alone; so that it becomes, in reality, the stamp of the Divinity, the divine pledge of the friendship of God, and the spiritual tie which binds and unites us to Christ; or, as St. Paul has it, *the Almighty hath anointed us in Christ; he hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts.* How valuable and excellent, then, must that be, which the Almighty grants unto his friends, as the pledge of his love and friendship! Observe how fond people are of every mark of distinction which sets them above the croud: the man of honour would sooner die, than be deprived of the prerogatives which raise him to dignity among mankind.—Observe now the distinction between us and those who have not been drawn out of the corrupted mass of mankind, and whilst you observe, adore with reverence and fear the mysterious judgments of the Lord. What has raised you to the glorious condition of the adoptive children of God? (Before this title how vain and empty are all human titles and pre-eminences!) What has made you favourites of
 God,

God, members of Christ, and co-heirs with him to the kingdom of Heaven?—The precious gift of sanctifying grace. Before we received this sanctifying grace we were enemies of God, *being all born children of wrath*, according to St. Paul; and not only enemies of God, but disqualified for his heavenly kingdom. This was the sad and deplorable condition we were in, before we received the sanctifying grace of God in baptism. But as soon as this divine grace was infused into our souls, the Almighty took us into his love and friendship, and ranked us among those who were entitled to all the joys and glory of Heaven. The reason why it is called justifying grace, is, because it is the inward principle of justice, and makes us both just and righteous before God. So long, therefore, as this inward principle of righteousness remains in our souls, so long are we the true children of God, and the objects of divine love: for the Almighty cannot behold this stamp or seal of Christ impressed upon our souls, without feeling for us the tender emotions of that love he always bore and shewed his only begotten son.

Divine grace is not only the inward principle of justice and righteousness, but likewise the spiritual tie which unites us to the Divinity; so as to make us, as St. Peter says, *in some measure partakers of the divine nature*. For it is not to be questioned, but the Divinity dwells in, and is most intimately united to, the soul of every righteous man: *He that adheres to God*, says St. Paul, *is one and the same spirit with him*; again, *don't you know you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God resides in you?* But in what consists, in the judgment of the Apostle, this intimate union which subsists between the Divinity and every righteous man? Some divines, remarkable for piety and learning, supported by the authority of many holy fathers, and especially those of the Greek Church, were of opinion, that,
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by virtue of sanctifying grace, the Holy Ghost is substantially, though not personally, united to the soul of a just man. St. Paul seems to hint at this: *the grace of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who has been given us*; and further, *the Spirit giveth testimony unto our spirit, or soul, that we are the children of God*. This union, though substantial, is not personal or hypostatical, to distinguish it from that admirable union the second person of the Divinity contracted with the humanity of Christ, which communicated to him the divine nature, with all the attributes of the Divinity, and in virtue of which he became in reality the son of God by nature; whereas we are only the children of God by adoption, in consequence of the union the Holy Ghost contracts with our souls. Others, again, are of opinion, that this union consists in the operation of the Spirit of God, which animates, protects, and cherishes the soul, so long as it is adorned with sanctifying grace, and by that means becomes the very life thereof. All are, however, agreed, that nothing can be more intimate than that union which the Divinity contracts with the soul of every just man, by means of divine grace; so that if it were possible for the Almighty God not to be immediately present and intimately united to every part of the creation, from the immensity of his nature, he must take a most particular pleasure to dwell with, and remain united to the soul of a righteous man.

Divine grace, therefore, unites us unto God. By it we truly possess the Almighty God, and are truly possessed by him. It is, as you have seen, the seal or stamp of Christ, and a sure pledge of life everlasting. But the moment we lose divine grace (and we lose it by the very first considerable sin we fall into after our conversion), we are separated from God, like a branch cut off from the stock whence it derived both life and nourishment.—*He that abideth not in me, says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, shall be cast away like a*
withered

withered branch.—Whence it follows, that the Almighty withdraws his love and affection from us, as soon as we forfeit his holy grace; and treats us thenceforward as persons unworthy his attention; his favours, or rewards. This consideration alone should animate you all, my brethren, with the greatest veneration and regard for the grace of God---a heavenly tie---which alone is capable of preventing our separation from the Divine Source of Happiness; but what should still increase its value in our opinion, is, that it is likewise the principle which gives life to our actions, and makes them any way agreeable or meritorious in the eyes of God.

That there are actions truly meritorious, or certainly productive of a heavenly reward, appears from that passage in the Gospel where Jesus Christ says, *even a glass of water given in my name, shall not want its reward.* But what is the principle that gives our actions such excellence, as to be worthy a divine reward?—Divine grace alone. *The stipend of sin is death,* says St. Paul, *but the grace of God is everlasting life.* It is the divine and sanctifying grace of God alone, that inspires and dignifies them so far, as to make them worthy the attention of a God, and his eternal rewards. So long, then, as we are possessed of the heavenly treasure of sanctifying grace, every action we perform in view of Christ, and from the influence of an actual grace, is a meritorious action; that is to say, an action whereby we merit an increase of grace in this life, and an additional degree of glory in the next. In this situation, all the prayers we put up to Heaven, all the alms we distribute among the poor, all the fasting or other acts of self-denial we perform, all the sufferings from pain or sickness we endure, all the contradictions or humiliations from rough or unreasonable tempers we sustain, are all so many additions to the glory and happiness that are reserved for us in the kingdom of Heaven. What advantage so great as the possession of that
grace

grace which procures such blessings? Nothing should be so estimable in the eyes of a Christian, as a situation wherein he can daily, even hourly, add, by all kinds of good works, to the treasures mentioned by Jesus Christ in the Gospel—the treasures promised to, and destined for, every true and faithful follower of Christ—those are, the riches of Heaven; which are the more valuable, as they are not subject to violence from the midnight robber, or destruction from the worm, or decay from length of time.

Should we, on the other hand, be deprived, my brethren, of the sanctifying grace of God, all our actions are dead.—St. Paul says so: *Though we should have faith enough to remove the mountains, and uplift them from their seats; though we should distribute all our substance among the poor, and assign our bodies to flames, yet without charity, or the love of God, which is always inseparable from sanctifying grace, we are nothing*; that is to say, no ways entitled to the friendship of God or his rewards.—Again, St. John: *he that loveth not, abideth in death*. Now, whilst a man continues in a state of death, it is plain he cannot perform any action worthy of eternal life. You are not, however, to imagine, that a Christian deprived of the sanctifying grace of God, cannot do good of any kind.—No: this is an error justly condemned by the Church of God. For in this condition, one may pray, lament, and humbly implore the forgiveness of his sins, thro' the merits of Christ, by means of the actual graces which are given him, and operate by pious thoughts in the mind, and good desires or emotions in the heart. Thus further graces may, and generally are, obtained, so as to bring about a perfect reconciliation with God. But be pleased to observe, that those actions do not entitle a person to any reward, because the sanctifying grace of God is not yet recovered, which is the principle that enlivens, and the source and root of all merit. Besides, although such actions do bring about a
reconciliation

reconciliation with God, yet it is not from any merit they possess, but because it were in some measure unbecoming a God infinitely good and merciful, not to forgive a sinner returning to him with sincerity, and earnestly soliciting pardon, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, every good action we perform in the state of grace, and from a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, becomes necessarily meritorious of life everlasting; according to what our Saviour says in the Gospel,—*He that remaineth in me, is he that bringeth forth much fruit.* Seeing, therefore, that divine grace is the principle of justification, whereby we are delivered from the empire of Satan, the slavery of sin, and eternal misery, the just punishment of sin; and likewise raised to the glorious condition of the adoptive children of God, from being children of wrath and the off-spring of corruption: seeing, moreover, that it is the spiritual tie which unites us unto God, and the fruitful principle which enlivens and dignifies our actions, so far as to make them productive of the rewards and blessings of Heaven; is it not with the strictest justice that St. Paul styles it, *a most inestimable treasure?* As an *inestimable treasure* is it now looked upon by the world? Do we manifest by our actions, by charity to the poor, meekness in our deportment, humility under suffering, charity among brethren, and love among all, that divine grace is the principle that animates our actions? Do we cherish it, I say, as St. Paul recommends by the parable of an *inestimable treasure?* If so, we should not, surely, be so ready to forfeit this holy grace upon every occasion, even for a momentary pleasure or a perishable interest. Learn, my brethren: “learn thy own dignity and greatness,” says the great St. Leo; “the dignity and greatness thou art raised to by the grace of God, and disdain to fall back to thy native baseness and original obscurity.” Let us, then, be extremely thankful to the infinite goodness
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of God, who has imparted to us his holy grace, in preference to thousands of others, who are buried in the dark shades of error and sin; to thousands upon thousands, who, after losing it once, were deprived of it evermore. Let us be truly sorrowful for having abused it so often, by the commission of sin. Let us be cautious, in the highest degree, to preserve it for the time to come: for although it be a treasure of the greatest value, yet it is a treasure we carry about us in a frail and brittle vessel, and necessarily draws along with it a certain train of obligations, which I shall now endeavour to lay before you.

II. The first obligation we contract, with regard to divine grace, is gratitude. The common light of reason we all possess by nature, points out the necessity of at least acknowledging the gifts we have received; and this acknowledgment should be proportioned to the magnitude or excellence of the gifts, and the dignity of the hand that bestows them. Divine grace is a gift of the greatest magnitude, the greatest excellence; because grace in this life is a sure pledge of glory hereafter, and the hand that bestows it is dignified beyond comprehension---the God of all glory. It follows, then, from the light of reason, that grace imposes a debt of acknowledgment; and in this debt all you, my brethren, and I too, will be found deeply involved. For this most excellent of God's gifts, his holy grace, how often have we not all been partakers of! First, his sanctifying grace in baptism, and afterwards as often as we have been reconciled to the Almighty after sin, in the tribunal of penance. ---Secondly, his actual grace, or these inward touches of the Holy Ghost which enlighten the mind and excite the heart to the performance of good.---Thirdly, those graces which prevent and inspire; those desires which stir up and enable us to act; which begin, continue, and finish all the good we perform.---In fine, not only those graces which are common to the generality of Christians, but

but likewise those strong, powerful, and victorious assistances which wean the heart from every unlawful affection, and disengage our souls from all inordinate attachment for the world, to unite them more intimately to God. Recollect, I beseech you, how often you have been favoured in so singular a manner from Heaven; sum up in your minds all the pious thoughts you ever entertained, the holy desires you felt in your hearts, the stings of conscience when you had sinned, the sorrow and compunction that ensued, the wholesome thoughts of amendment and the effectual resolution of returning to the Lord: these were all so many graces from God. Add to all this, the inestimable favour of being brought up in the true faith of Christ: for had we been born in the darkness of infidelity, amidst pagan and unbelieving nations, in all appearance we should never have heard of the name of Christ, and, consequently, must have been deprived of the knowledge of him, who alone is *the way, the truth, and the life*. But the great God has been pleased, in his infinite mercy, to call us, from the earliest dawn of life, to *the admirable light of his Gospel*, and to place us, with his own hand, in the way that surely leads to eternal happiness. Now let me ask, should not our acknowledgments be unbounded, in proportion as those graces and blessings are unbounded? Have we not just reason to cry out, with the Royal Prophet, *Blessed be for ever and ever the name of the Lord!* who has treated us infinitely more mercifully than these unhappy nations, who cover the wide surface of the earth, and are as yet buried in the shades of death.

However strong the motives are to excite our gratitude, from the number and excellence of the favours or graces bestowed on us; as well as the supreme dignity of the hand that bestows them, still another motive of great magnitude arises, from a consideration, that those great and inestimable graces we have so often received, were the
pure,

pure, gratuitous favours of the bounty and mercy of the Lord, which we could never hope for, or pretend to, of ourselves, or obtain by any endeavours of our own: for the grace of God is never due to any merit or work of nature; *otherwise grace were no longer grace*, as St. Paul says, *but the just reward of our works*.---Again he says, *by grace we are saved, through faith; and this is not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God: not by works, that no one might boast*.---So that whatever we have received, either as grace or favour, was purely the effect of the infinite mercy of Almighty God; and those favours or graces he might as well have bestowed upon thousands of others, who certainly would have proved less unworthy than we are. But why does the Lord give his holy grace to some, and refuse it to others? Master as he is of the heart of man, and the manifold infallible assistances which are contained in the immense treasures of his mercy, why does he not always bestow those strong, powerful graces which never fail to rescue a sinner from the empire of sin, and lead him on surely to eternal happiness? For what reason is one nation illustrated with the light of the Gospel, whilst others are left to the end of life in the ignorance and prejudices they were bred in? Why does not the sun of justice equally diffuse its shining beams over the whole surface of the earth, and not confine its happy influence to a few selected people? In the contemplation of these profound mysteries, human reason is lost; and instead of presumptuously undertaking to discuss them, we should cry out, with St. Paul, *how inscrutable are thy judgments, O Lord, and how unsearchable thy ways!* He asks elsewhere, *Who was ever admitted into the secret councils of the Almighty, or who dare take upon him to give him advice?* For us it is enough to know, that Almighty God, in all his actions, is necessarily governed by justice and unerring wisdom. It is enough for us to know, that he grants to all mankind the graces that are necessary and
sufficient

sufficient to work their salvation, and attain eternal happiness; which St. Paul assures us of,---*It is the will of God that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*: so that if he deals sparingly by some, whilst he pours profusion on others, it is because he is pleased to do so, as being the great, independent, and uncontrollable master of his gifts. For you it is enough to know, that each of you in particular, have frequently received from Almighty God the most valuable blessings---blessings that would have converted thousands of others, and raised them to a high degree of piety and godliness. In a word, is it not enough for us to know, that the Almighty intends, and sincerely wishes, to give us all a place in his heavenly kingdom, by the many and effectual steps he has already taken towards this great end? Here, therefore, let us stand, *fastened to and grounded on this anchor of faith*, as St. Paul says; and lay aside all vain, rash, and presumptuous researches about the conduct of God with regard to others. Let us humbly adore what we cannot comprehend; because whatever a God does must be necessarily just and good. Let us gratefully acknowledge the favours we have received from the Lord, rather than arraign his wisdom or goodness for not having bestowed the same upon others. This is the first obligation we lie under, with regard to the grace of God; the next is, to comply faithfully therewith.

Almighty God being infinite in all his attributes, it cannot be questioned, but his wisdom can devise, and his power effect an infinity of ways, infallible and sure, of subduing the most rebellious hearts, and bringing them from sin to justice and godliness. He it is, as the Gospel says, that can change *the very stones into sons of Abraham*; that is, the most hardened sinners into righteous and godly men. Nor can it be likewise questioned, but the Almighty has it in his power, not only to convert the most obdurate and stubborn hearts, but also to conduct
 them

them surely to the harbour of eternal life, in spite of all the opposition they can meet with from the fury of their infernal enemies, the wicked examples of this world, or the weakness or frailty of their own nature. Notwithstanding all this, it is an undoubted principle of our holy religion, that it is in the power of man to resist the strongest graces that are bestowed, as appears from what St. Stephen said to the Jews, *You always resist the Holy Ghost*. This must necessarily be the case, otherwise the liberty of man would be destroyed under the motion and influence of grace, which is an error condemned by the Church of God. Therefore, as it is in the power of man to resist the grace of God, so it is in his power to comply faithfully therewith: and this power implies a strict obligation: for as every grace is an assistance from Heaven, and granted for some virtuous end, it follows, Almighty God will bring us all to a severe account hereafter for abusing them; as is clearly laid down by Christ himself,---*Woe be to thee Corozain; woe unto thee Bethsaida: because if the miracles had been done in Tyre and Sydon, that have been wrought in you, they had long since done penance in sack-cloth and ashes*. Let us now consider, my brethren, how much we have to fear from the justice of God on this account: Have we been of the number of those faithful servants who kept not idle the talent they had received, but took care to lay it out to the greatest advantage? Or, have we not copied after that careless and indolent servant, who buried in the ground the talent that was given him, and thereby rendered ineffectual what, in more careful and industrious hands, would prove a fruitful source of inexhaustible wealth? How often have we resisted the grace of God? How often, from the perverseness of our will, have we refused to comply with such pious emotions as the Spirit of Grace was pleased to produce in our hearts? Had we been always faithful to the manifold graces of the Lord, what improvements would

would we not have made in virtue! to what a high degree of sanctity would we not have risen! what treasures would we not have hoarded towards life everlasting! Let us now begin, and for the time to come shew ourselves more faithful to the grace of God, otherwise we shall suffer; but how?---by being deprived of this divine grace we so frequently resist and abuse. This is the dreadful punishment the Almighty usually inflicts on all those who neglect to make the proper use of his holy grace, as Christ declares, *He that abounds shall receive more, but he that has nothing* (that is, he that has added nothing to what he had received), *shall even lose what he has.*

Nothing can be more just and reasonable, than that the Almighty should withdraw his hand, and cease bestowing his favours upon men, who not only prove unworthy of them, but abuse and resist them. Is it not equally just, those favours and graces should be transferred unto and bestowed upon others, who, by their faithful and constant compliance, make them fructify a hundred-fold? Has not our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, assured us, in the Gospel, that *people shall come from the East and West to the enjoyment of Heaven, whilst the children of the kingdom are cast forth and excluded from it.* By the preaching of the Gospel you are become the children of the kingdom; and a sure pledge of this kingdom is given you by divine grace: but if you resist it---if you do not faithfully co-operate with it, the Lord will withdraw it, and cast you forth; whilst he shall bestow it upon others, who, by good use thereof, shall become entitled to all the joys of the kingdom of Heaven. What greater misfortune can befall a Christian, than the loss of divine grace? What treasure so estimable? what loss so deplorable? This treasure includes every good; its loss every evil; as being a sure forerunner of eternal misery. For what is man without divine grace?---a compound

pound of sin and corruption, surrounded with dangers he cannot avoid, beset with enemies too strong to overcome, led away with passions he can neither quell or gratify; in a word, one sunk under the completest misery, dead to all hopes of eternal life, and a victim doomed to the everlasting torments of Hell. Dreadful as it is, is not this the situation we are likely to be reduced to? Is not the measure of our iniquities so far filled up, as to force Almighty God to withdraw, I do not say all his graces (for this were too severe and inconsistent with his unbounded mercy), but those strong and effectual graces which enable us to perform, and make us actually fulfil, every essential part of our duty, to the very last moment of our lives? Is he not provoked, I say, to impart no other assistances but those common and feeble aids, whereby we may, but never will, arrive to the kingdom of God? The only way to prevent this great, this inexplicable misfortune, is, as St. Paul directs, *not to receive the grace of God in vain*; that is, in other words, to comply faithfully therewith. But as this requires a most powerful grace, let us unanimously apply for it to the Almighty God, saying, with the great St. Augustine, "Give us, O Lord, what you command, and command what you will." Treat us with as much severity as you please, but do not, at any time, withdraw your holy grace from us. As long as you condescend to enlighten our minds ---to move and excite our hearts, so long we may repent; but if you withdraw your holy grace, all hope is lost; all is lost, and eternal perdition must ensue. Our infidelity to your graces, we confess, deserves such severe punishment; but thy mercies, O my God! are beyond our ingratitude or weakness. Let it not be in vain that we receive and profess the true faith of Christ. Let it not be in vain that we have so often shared in your holy graces. Let that predilection you have shewn us, "O ancient Beauty!" in calling us early, and

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preserving us hitherto in thy saving faith, extend to the last moment of life ; that, after praising and adoring the name of Christ, the Author of all Grace, upon earth, we may eternally share in his glory and triumphs in the kingdom of Heaven.
Amen.

S E R M O N VIII.

O N H E L L.

How terrible is this place! Gen. ch. 28, v. 17.

THE existence of a place, and the eternity of the pains, wherewith the enemies of God in this life are punished in the next, are pillars of the Christian Religion, and a doctrine held among the faithful since the earliest ages of the world. Man, formed for happiness, has by nature a strong aversion to pain, and hastily turns aside from the contemplation, even in idea, of those scenes which may possibly prove the woful source of pain and anguish hereafter.—Hence that cold indifference, that languid zeal, with which most people receive the warm and charitable admonitions of the ministers of God, when they represent the horrid consequences of a life of sin to the sinner, and the necessity of penance. But in proportion as this indifference appears remarkable, the necessity appears greater of awakening by terror him whom sin has allured into a fatal indifference or security. For this purpose I feel it incumbent on me this evening to entertain you, not with the wisdom and goodness of God in creating the whole universe with one almighty *fiat*, which his power governs, and rules, and upholds; not with reproaches for your ingratitude in repeatedly insulting and provoking this great God of power, by your manifold sins, and resisting his frequent calls by the preaching of the word and the inward motions of his grace; not, I say, with the contemplation of the joys of Heaven reserved for the true followers of

Jesus Christ, in bearing their cross, after his example, during the short period of life here below, in meekness, humility, patience, and suffering; but in laying before you—especially you, O sinner!—a faithful view of that place of torture which the Almighty has made in the next life, for the exercise of his justice upon sinners, commonly called HELL. To the contemplation of the horrors of that place of woe, I solicit your most favourable attention. Clouds of darkness, I know, conceal from human view and from human comprehension, a just knowledge of the pains of Hell. The knowledge of man is limited, and, therefore, cannot comprehend, much less express, any thing that is infinite. Aided by the Spirit of God, and enlightened by his word in the holy Scriptures, let us descend alive into Hell, as St. Bernard advises, and religiously contemplate the sufferings of the damned, that they may influence our conduct, and prevent us from experiencing them in reality hereafter. Let us examine *how terrible is this place*, in order thereby to create in our hearts a holy *fear of the Lord*, which the Royal Prophet says, *is the beginning of wisdom*. One of the most effectual and usual snares of the enemy of mankind, is, to remove the thoughts, and destroy, if possible, the belief of a Hell, whereby men are deceived by a false security, and pushed on, blind-folded, or as if in a dream, until at length they awake in the experimental knowledge of its sufferings. From such fatal delusion, from such knowledge, Lord God! do thou deliver us.—Since thy abundant mercies, and the great and glorious kingdom thou hast prepared for those that love thee, are insufficient to make us forsake sin and error, let the terror of thy judgments, of thy uplifted arm over the damned in Hell, so fill us with a holy fear of thy anger, that henceforward we may for ever forsake every thing displeasing to you, O my God! and, by a life of penance, avoid knowing, but in speculation, what Hell is, and what the damned suffer there. As I have

have hinted, great uncertainty lies before us respecting the particular place of Hell, and the nature of the torments therein, but sufficient it is for your instruction to know,

First, the existence of Hell, and,

Secondly, that the torments therein are extreme.

I. The general prevalence of impiety and irreligion, the decay of morals in a country once celebrated for sanctity, exhibit an idea of a people professing religion without faith, or denying by their lives the doctrine they profess. Wasting away their days in the pursuit of pleasure and the gratification of animal sense, they shut their eyes, and seem insensible to an hereafter, or that the criminal actions of this life will be punished in the next. Hell to them is a mystery which they wish not to touch on; but lest they may hereafter feel what Hell is, let them attend to me in exploring its existence, and strive to avoid it, by a true change of life.

By Hell we understand a secret, unknown, but horrid place of suffering, *a place of torments*, which Jesus Christ calls it, in the Gospel of St. Luke, where those who die in mortal sin are eternally punished, in a manner more severe than can be imagined. The declarations of Christ on this subject, and the circumstances attending such declarations, are so clear and strong, as leave no room to doubt they could be understood in any other but an obvious and literal sense. *Those*, says Christ (meaning the reprobated), *shall go into eternal torments: Begone, ye accursed, into eternal fire.* The plain, distinct, intelligible manner in which the Word of God speaks, is the fullest refutation of the objection raised of late by impious and designing men. The word *eternal*, say they, is to be understood in a figurative sense, and means no more than an immense duration of time. But the circumstance wherein Jesus Christ speaks, must remove such an objection: for you must observe, in this passage he relates the solemn, definitive sentence

he is to pronounce at the end of the world on the whole race of mankind. Now a last, supreme, irrevocable sentence, must necessarily be comprised in such clear, decisive terms, as to leave no room for doubt or misconception. Besides, be pleased to take notice, that in the same sentence Christ our Saviour makes mention of the everlasting felicity of the just, as well as the interminable sufferings of the reprov'd; and as this felicity was never understood to be confined by any limits of time, but to extend to all eternity, whilst God is God, how shall any one presume to put a forced construction upon the words of Christ, and attribute a meaning which they never did, never could bear? If Hell was only a region of transient suffering, if it had its limits, however remote, in point of existence, the damned would in reality one day be released; but, according to the oracles of Holy Writ, this can never be. Besides, God could not be God without creating Hell, in order to satisfy his justice in punishing sin; which being an attack upon the Divinity, contracts thereby an infinite malice; and as it is an article of faith, that after death we become incapable of merit or demerit, it follows, that a soul quitting the body in mortal sin, remains for ever in that same identical state, without alteration, increase or diminution, and must, of course, become the eternal victim of the justice of Heaven, in the horrible gulph of Hell. The unerring Church of God, always guided by the Holy Ghost, has anathematized, from the beginning, all those who held or maintained a contrary opinion on this subject. Soon as corruption began to spread in the Christian world, there arose proud, stubborn, licentious men, who, breaking down the barriers of morality, presumptuously called in question all such tenets as stood in opposition to their lives. But their iniquitous projects were soon confounded, and truth restored to its primitive rights: for the eternal punishments that are decreed for all those who die in disgrace with God, were

were strenuously asserted, and delivered down from age to age, as an essential part of divine revelation. But how can these eternal punishments be reconciled with the infinite goodness of God? Who is the man that dares call the Almighty to an account for his actions? or *which of us has been ever introduced, as St. Paul says, into the secret and impenetrable councils of the Divinity?* Almighty God has certainly revealed this essential point of faith: we know from himself, that he has fixed a place for unrepenting sinners, where everlasting torments shall be their portion; and what God does, must surely be founded on justice.

Although the authorities drawn from the Scriptures be sufficient to satisfy the inquiring mind relative to the existence of Hell, Divines still go farther in reasoning upon the wisdom and justice of God, in appointing a place and allotting eternal sufferings for the punishment of sin. God, say they, created the whole world for his own glory: he could not have created it for any other end. As this glory could not be obtained but by an exact and constant obedience to his divine laws, the wisdom of God required he should employ the most effectual means for this end; such means, however, as were agreeable to the nature and liberty of man. What means were these? Rewards and punishments. What punishments: terrestrial and transitory? No: this would never have answered the views of God.---For if now, when we see the deep abyss of Hell opening wide beneath our feet, and the wrath of Heaven flaming over our heads; if now, when we know eternal woes to be the dreadful pay of sin, so very few are found who shew their submission to the laws of God, how great and universal would the corruption be, were this restraint taken off, and our disobedience punished with any thing short of the devouring flames of Hell! In a supposition of this kind, I do not hesitate to say, the very name of submission or virtue would be unknown in the world:

it was, therefore, highly justifiable in the Almighty to adopt such methods as must have secured his own glory, by compelling mankind, by terror, where his love was inoperative, to a due subjection to his holy laws. This wise and just disposition of Providence becomes the more remarkable; as, in the opinion of the Fathers, the glory of God becomes no less exalted by the reprobation of the wicked, and their condemnation to Hell, than, as St. Austin says, from the exaltation of the elect, and the glory bestowed on them in Heaven: for if here he displays his mercy, there he shews his justice (two essential attributes in a God); here he shews his unbounded goodness and the immense treasures of his glory, there the terrible effects of his wrath; here he is the glorious rewarder of virtue, there the severe and inexorable avenger of vice; here, in fine, he rules over man by the charms of his love, but there he punishes by the force of unresisted power; whereby is plainly seen the uncontrollable empire which the sovereign Lord and Master of things has a right to exert over all the works of his hands. Pursuing these reflections, those men remarkable in all ages of the Church for their learning and piety, who have, and do make the law of God the object of their studies, the rule of their conduct: divines, I say, observe, that since God was pleased to decree punishment for sin, he must have observed a just proportion, and, of course, ordained that punishment eternal: for sin being an attack upon the supreme majesty of God, who is infinite in all his perfections, contracts by that attack, as I have suggested to you before, a degree of criminality infinitely great, and consequently deserves, as well as positively incurs, an infinite punishment. Now this punishment cannot be infinitely great in measure (as their language runs), man being too narrow a sphere for the unlimited power of God to exert itself upon, therefore it must be infinitely great in duration—it must be eternal, or everlasting. Observe

serve this, sinners! you who make so little of insulting the majesty of God, by multiplied and repeated crimes, by cursing and swearing by that awful name, the sound of which claims the homage and the veneration of all creatures in Heaven, on Earth, and in Hell—a name which equally constitutes the joy of the blessed as the terror of the damned; observe what sin is, you drunkards! you sensual and worldly men! you Christians! for whom mercy is yet in store, provided, by a sincere change of life, you call for mercy whilst mercy is attainable; observe, I say, the consequence of sin unrepented of, even one sin—for example, a sin in thought, or the criminal enjoyment of one moment—Eternal Punishment. The justice of God decreed it: the justice of God is right. To conceive the horror of sin, to conceive the malice of sin, much less to express it, is not within the compass of human understanding. I know the effects of sin, but I cannot comprehend the malice of sin. The Eternal Wisdom of my God conceived it, else he would never have revealed it unto man. Our not understanding the mysteries of our faith, proves only our ignorance or weakness, but not the uncertainty or falshood of what we believe. To compare great things with small: suppose, for instance, a great and powerful prince had been publicly insulted by one of the lowest and meanest of his subjects, no punishment would be thought too severe to atone for the atrociousness of the offence.—If this be deemed both just and equitable, when a mortal man alone is offended, can any punishment be considered too severe which falls upon those who offend, insult, and wage war against the great and eternal King of Heaven? But comparisons are inadequate to illustrate this dark, mysterious point. The dignity of my God, and the glory that surrounds his throne, expose the folly of comparison. But true it is, that sin being a direct violation of the law of God, contracts a species of infinity from the infinity of the great

Being it offends. "Was it not very just," inquires the great St. Auſtin, "that endless torments should be reserved for those who wish to enjoy "unlawful pleasures without end?" Endless torments are certainly due to sin; and equally certain it is, that endless torments would have been the certain lot of all the descendants of Adam, in consequence of the sin of Adam, and of their own personal sins, had not the love of Jesus Christ interposed in our favour. In his ignominy, in his humiliations, in his sufferings upon the Cross, consider what Sin is, what Hell is, what Heaven is. So black and foul is sin, that were all the angels in Heaven, and all the just upon earth, to lay down their lives in atonement to the divine justice for one mortal sin, that sin would not be blotted out: because the infinite justice of God required infinite satisfaction, which no finite being could give.—Jesus Christ, therefore, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity, God from all eternity, became man, as related in the Gospel, and by his merits and sufferings, under the appearance of a sinner, not only blotted out sin and rescued us from Hell, but, moreover, purchased our primitive title to the kingdom of Heaven, provided we fulfil his holy laws. But the deplorable perversity of a sinner is such, that, notwithstanding the obedience and love he owes God, in return for his unbounded love towards him; notwithstanding the injunctions he lays down for him, with Heaven on the one hand and Hell on the other; notwithstanding the uncontrollable power and inflexible justice of the sovereign Lord of the Universe---by sin he rejects the favour of God and the possession of Heaven, and also accepts of his eternal abode in Hell.

On Hell have thus the Fathers reasoned, and sufficient is this to remove any seeming difficulty that may attend this fundamental point of our faith. An inquiry into the particular place where Hell is, is equally useless as vain: useless, because the knowledge thereof can be attended with no
salutary

salutary consequence; and vain, because vain and frivolous is all inquiry grounded on conjecture. In the holy Scriptures Hell is called by various names: *The lake of the wrath of God; A pool of fire and brimstone.*---Rev. *A land of darkness and misery.*---Job. All which are but terms merely conformable to our ideas of what is terrible. But it is generally believed, and this belief is supported by the parable of Dives, in the Gospel, that Hell is extremely remote, or in direct opposition to Heaven. It is related, that those above (meaning the blessed) cannot descend to the residence of Dives, nor can he ascend where Abraham is, on account of a prodigious gulph or distance. Now the terms descend and ascend are well understood, and found the belief that Heaven is placed far beyond all the works of the creation, and that Hell lies below us, or under our feet. Whether under our feet means the centre of this globe, or any other orb in the planetary or celestial system, is an hypothesis more likely to gratify idle speculation than useful knowledge. The knowledge I wish to convey to you will prove useful, if---carrying in your recollection the existence of Hell; the eternity of its torments, which are never to be lessened, and that *out of Hell there is no redemption*---you effectually reform your lives, leave off sinning, and return, though late, to the Lord your God. *Remember your last things*, says the Spirit of God—Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven—and *you will never sin*. Getting up and lying down, morning and evening, amidst your ordinary occupations of life, but especially when any temptation, or even suggestion to sin, attacks you, remember the burning flames of Hell, which were made for sin alone. Recollect that a consent to that temptation or this suggestion, may induce Almighty God to cut short your life by a sudden death; or that the earth may open under your feet, as it did under Core, and swallow you up alive into Hell. Forsake, then, in future, all unlawful pleasure; Refrain from drunkenness, lest
God.

God may call you drunk to judgment; from all injustice, for he is the God of justice; from imprecation, from blasphemy, for holy is his name, and all the angels in Heaven unceasingly call him holy! holy! holy! from lewd and obscene discourses and scandalous conversations. Ah! why will you expose yourselves to eternal perdition for the empty gratification of one moment? No, my dear brethren, do not. Return back to the Lord your God.—Return to him who calls on you from the cross; who keeps open the gates of Heaven, and tenderly invites you to enter in. Remember, the greatest sinners have proved the greatest saints. The fear of Hell brought them back to a true sense of their danger; and what began through fear, ended in charity, or the love of God. The fear of Hell has peopled the deserts with austere hermits and venerable anchorets, who fled from the snares of life. The fear of Hell has made savage forests, bleak mountains, lonely valleys, dismal solitudes, and frightful caverns, resound with lamentations of penance and the sweet harmony of praise and jubilation. We all deserved Hell more than once, as every mortal sin made us liable to Hell-fire. Our good God has hitherto spared us, in patient expectation of our amendment. He has given us time: he now offers grace and forgiveness. Beware of abusing his present invitation; beware of that place of woe announced in the Scriptures, asserted by the Church, and founded on the most essential attributes of God—his glory, his goodness, and his justice: for the pains of Hell are no less certain in their existence than dreadful in their nature, as I come now to lay before you.

II. Hell would be no longer that terrible place announced in the Holy Writings, had not pain, and the eternal existence of that pain, combined and mutually co-operated to render it terrible beyond the reach of expression or human comprehension. The pains of Hell are two-fold in their nature,—
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the pain of loss and the pain of sense. The pain of loss consists in being deprived of that sovereign good—Almighty God; and that supreme happiness—Heaven, for which the soul was made. The correct notion she has, in her immortal state, of the beauty and charms of God, are such, that the most vehement desires of an union with him, which the reprov'd can never obtain, tear and torment her most cruelly. I have no idea that can convey to you any correct notion how great the anguish is of a soul repelled from an union with God. Encumbered on earth with a heavy load of flesh, which undoubtedly obscures the functions of the soul, we imperfectly know but little of her faculties, and that little chiefly by the operation of the senses. Disencumbered of the body, the full perfections of her nature blaze out, and the first act of her new state, is, a violent impulse to the great Author of her being, the Fountain of Happiness. The loss of God in the next life, may at present make little impression on your minds; but, in the opinion of Divines, it will cause greater pain than all the other torments of Hell united. Born for happiness, happiness is our strongest pursuit; and, disguise it under what colours we may, happiness is the principle that governs and animates every action of our's in this life. The various amusements, and other decoys of life, so far blunt the edge that necessarily attends this passion, that during the existence of mortality its propelling powers are unknown. But when disengaged from the body, and no longer liable to the impositions of sense, then this passion bursts forth in its full extent. The soul knows then the beauty and perfections of her great Maker; but she knows, also, that, for her sins here on earth, she is for ever cut off from any intercourse with him, but as a victim for his avenging justice. The greatness of her loss, and the greatness of the folly that caused this loss, are two ideas that seize her, and that never cease tormenting her; the one with black despair, the other

other with bitter self-reproaches: "The clear vision of God, the joys of Heaven, the incomprehensible glory the just and good are now in possession of, were once for me; but are for me no more!" That thought will pierce her more than fire, and make her torments double.---What is more, she shall never be able to forget it. But listen: "My dream of life is over. I have spent it in pleasures, in opulence, and honour. What avail they now?—miseries. By whose fault?—"my own." This is the worm that shall not cease tormenting them. *Their worm dieth not*, says St. Mark. The worm of conscience lays before them continually the magnitude of their loss and the magnitude of their folly. The distraction caused in the mind by the most calamitous events in life, can but ill represent the agony of the damned for their exclusion from Heaven. Confusion and misery are seen to follow from the humiliations of the great and the exalted here below: I shall relate one instance or two of this.----King Assuerus, one of the successors of those princes who overturned the Chaldean empire, had raised to honours far beyond any prince of his extensive empire, his favourite counsellor, Prince Aman. His ambition still aspired to higher honours. The King consulting him how he should honour one whom he intended to honour; Prince Aman, imagining himself the object of the King's regards, advised he should be clothed with the royal garments, and his horse led by the first prince of the empire throughout the city of Susa. Do so by Mardochai, said the King. So Prince Aman was obliged to lead Mardochai's horse; and the Scripture says, he returned home *mourning, and his head covered*. Conceive, if you can, the pain of mind a sovereign prince must feel on being pulled down from his throne, and degraded below any one of his subjects. Such has been the case with Sedecias, King of Juda, against whom Nabuchodonosor fought; and when Jerusalem was on the point of

of being taken, he fled by night: but being pursued was taken on the plains of Jericho. On being brought before the king his enemy, he first ordered the sons of Sedecias to be slain in the father's presence, and after that, his own eyes to be plucked out. In this miserable condition, reduced from his royal rank and loaded with heavy chains, was he brought to Babylon. Humiliations so cruel must have been more afflicting to Sedecias than the severest death. But if this be the consequence of losing a perishable crown, what concern, what anxiety must the damned feel for the loss of the kingdom of Heaven?

To the interior anguish of the mind arising from the pain of loss, the damned must feel the anguish arising from the immediate action of fire, called the pain of sense. As we are all to resume our bodies at the day of judgment, the Almighty God has instituted and ordained the fire of Hell, chiefly to punish the body, which had been the base instrument of iniquity upon earth. Fancy therefore unto yourselves a vast ocean of fire, according to the beautiful figure of St. John in his Revelations, and all the reprov'd plunged both soul and body into this burning pool. Fancy to yourselves how this fire must penetrate in one instant, their flesh, their bones, the marrow of the bones, and reduce them all into one flaming mass of fire. Here are they for ever burning, but never consuming. "The same fire that consumes them, says Tertullian, by a surprising miracle of the justice of God, renews continually the substance of their bodies, to make them a new and constant prey to new and continual fires." It must be so, my brethren; it must be a fire differing from all other fires; a fire blown up by the flaming wrath of an exasperated God: A fire that shall punish, that shall torment, that shall overwhelm in woe all those who despise his authority and trample on his laws here on earth. On earth all pain and sorrow are

are limited. Beyond a certain degree human nature cannot suffer. Beside, pain is intermitted here, and is followed by casual comfort. Were it possible for all the sufferings, arising from indignities, sickness or pain, to which human nature is liable, were they all united and centered in one person; still that person would have the comfort (and a great comfort it is) that one time or other these sufferings would end. At worst they must end with life. Besides, the consolation of a friend, the light of day, balmy sleep, pity and other auxiliaries, all contribute to remove perfect misery from all human woes. But into Hell hope never enters. No mitigation, no relaxation. Cloathed in immortality as well as the blessed in Heaven, immortal torments are their lot. Their consoling, pitying friends—Devils, who aggravate their torments by their hideous figures and horrid yells. Cries and groans and tears and gnashing of teeth, mutual and self-reproaches, maledictions and blasphemies are their eternal occupations. There shall the glutton, shall those insensible to the claims of the poor, the drunkard who makes a God of his belly, shall there cry out with Dives, *O how we are tormented in these flames!* There shall the blasphemer call out, but call in vain, for one drop of water to cool his tongue: that tongue given him to speak the praises of his great creator, but which in direct opposition to his command, he has made the foul instrument of cursing, swearing, lying and backbiting, shall then be cruelly but justly burned and inflamed. The voluptuous shall feel new and unheard of torments in their bowels. Those wicked hands employed in life, in stripping the widow and orphan, in violently opposing might to right, shall then be bound in everlasting chains. *They shall be salted with fire,* The burning fire of God's anger shall salt them and miraculously preserve them from consumption or decay, in order to become the eternal victims of his
inflamed

inflamed justice. The brain shall boil for all the bad thoughts, evil designs, wicked counsels, bad advice, and all the black catalogue of crimes which originate there. Distraction and madness shall not come to its relief; I mean that madness and distraction attended by a derangement of the intellectual faculties. No: the miserable recollection of what the soul lost, shall add double fires to what she feels. The heart formed for the love of the creator, but abused by a criminal attachment to, and love of the creature, shall there burn, not with the chaste fires of divine love, but with the unquenchable fires of God's hatred. The sinner, St. John speaks in his Revelations, *shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.* Something inflammatory and overpowering, possessing largely the qualities of brimstone, shall increase the fires the sinner shall feel. He shall not possess those evils in a small degree, like sipping at a vessel. He shall largely partake of them. He shall *drink*: he shall feel the avenging hand of God vindicating his justice, in adding to those evils *which are mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath.* Could we, protected by a special providence, view the horrid caverns of Hell, there should we see involved in greater calamities than I have mentioned, many of our acquaintances and friends, perhaps relations, whom the justice of God called out of this life. Then should they say what I now say to you, beware of this place of woe. Take example. Take counsel. Do not wait to learn in Hell, *how horrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God.* Begin this day to forsake the broad way of the world, which surely ends in Hell. Begin and take up a life of penance, for short and uncertain is the term of life and the end of penance is joy. Take up the cross and the commandments, which you have so often by your conduct trampled under foot, and they will surely
said

lead to life everlasting. For let me ask you, with the Prophet Isa. *Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Unless thy mercy calls us to speedy repentance, which of us, Lord God, shall escape that *fire*, those *burnings*! Which of you, let me ask, could endure to hold his little finger for five minutes over a candle? I don't know what consideration could induce the poorest of you, my Brethren, to do so. Reflect then I beseech you, on hell, where pain is torture and torture agony. Have pity on your own souls, and save them by a true conversion from the terrible fire of Hell, compared to which St. Austin says, "the fire of this life is but a painted fire." *Your enemy, the Devil, like a roaring lion, is constantly roaming about seeking whom to devour: resist him,* St. Peter desires you. Turn to the Lord and call on him for aid. If in Heaven he be the great rewarder of virtue, the dreadful avenger of sin in hell, on earth he is the patient, forbearing, tender father, calling and wishing the return of his strayed children. To us he has been much more merciful, than to thousands upon thousands, who now lie buried in hell, for lesser crimes than we have committed. Should he call us out of this world this night, O Jesus, how deplorable would be our case! return then I say, forsake your evil ways, and return unto the Lord your God. Do penance whilst penance is acceptable; lest the dreadful night of eternity should open on you, and sufferings without fruit, without measure, without end, should seize you.

Hell would no longer be that terrible place, I have endeavoured to lay before you, but for the eternity of its torments. From this eternity alone you are to form a true notion of Hell. But when I am unable by reason to comprehend, much less to calculate by art the full term of that dreadful sound—eternity, how shall I impress you with any correct notion relative thereto? I may amuse
you

you with calculations, but these in attempting to penetrate eternity, only expose the ignorance as well as the folly of such attempt. I may demand your steady attention to comprehend numbers, and numbers to a certain degree may be comprehended: but in eternity numbers are lost. You may comprehend the extension of one year, composed of months, days, hours, minutes and seconds of time: you may comprehend a thousand years, composed of the small particles of seconds, even a million. Suppose now a million of ages for every second of time in a million of years; this would form an extent of time beyond human comprehension. Were the pains of hell to end with this term, though exceedingly remote, Hell would lose the greatest curse it is afflicted with, and the hope of deliverance would console them in their torments. But all hope is cut off, for when this column of time shall pass over, eternity then will be but beginning. Now I dare say it would be found very unpleasant to be tied down for one's life, suppose thirty or forty years, on a bed of roses. If laid on a bed of thorns how much more dreadful? But hell the dreadful abode of the damned, shall continue invariably to torment with inexpressible pains, every part both in soul and body of the miserable victims, for a period beyond the reach of calculation or human comprehension—for eternity. The holy Ghost says so by the pen of St. John, *and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever, neither have they rest day nor night.* Lord God! why dost thou mention *day* where no day, but eternal night and everlasting horror dwell? To let you see the uniformity, the regularity, the constancy of their torments. *Their worm shall never die, and their fire shall never be quenched.* For though day succeeds night and night day with us, with them all is horrid darkness, horrid pain, horrid eternity. Full fifty ages are passed away, and more too, since the murderer of his brother,

brother, the unhappy Cain, became the sad victim of the fire of hell, and yet he feels and suffers and moans as much this instant as the first moment of his immersion. He is only beginning his sufferings. Eternity lies before him, and for eternity he must suffer without hope or mitigation. Where time ends, there eternity begins, for in eternity time is swallowed up. The dreadful thoughts of eternity attended by eternal pain, are sufficient to strike terror into the most undaunted hearts. You brave, courageous, undaunted sinners, you who now abuse the abundant mercies of the Lord, waiting for your repentance, how shall you withstand the extended arm of the Lord, stretched out in vengeance over you for eternity? Why then do you resist his calls, his invitations. His tender mercies now invite you to the ways that lead to life everlasting. To repentance he invites you: but he invites like a God: he offers mercy, but he threatens vengeance; *for every tree that brings not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.*

Before we take leave of this *land of darkness, covered with the gloomy shades of death, where Job says, no order but eternal horror and confusion dwell th,* where to the pain of loss is added the pain of sense and both eternal, let us pause a while in order to draw some useful lesson. That lesson is pointed out by Jesus Christ himself; *if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off;* cut off sin by the root, which scandalizes thee before God and his angels, and cast it off. Cut off cursing and swearing, lies, fraud, slander, intemperance, drunkenness, all injustice and idleness. Cut up your passions by the root. Cast away bad company, bad words, evil thoughts and unchaste looks. Forsake the region of death where you live. Return by penance. Call on Jesus and he will hear you; for he says, *it is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire.* From this fire, Almighty
God,

God, do thou deliver us; and receive in mercy thy servants returning to thee. We acknowledge your power in creating and your justice in inflicting the pains of hell for the punishment of sin; and that often, very often we deserved to feel the terrible effects of your justice. As you have spared, spare us still. Still let thy protecting mercy cover us; that atoning by our future lives for the follies and crimes of the past, we may not only escape the ever burning flames of hell, but likewise receive admittance thro' Jesus Christ into your glorious kingdom in Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N IX.
ON THE WORD OF GOD.

The Sower went forth to sow his seed.

S. Luke, 8th ch. 5. v.

IT is easy to conceive, what high and pleasing expectations this careful and vigilant husbandman must have entertained, at this time of his provident industry. After chusing the properest season of the year, employing the best seed, and bestowing all the care and industry he was capable of; he goes forth, the Gospel says, *he went forth, to sow his seed*, full of the hopes of the rich fruits, he had a right to expect from his toils and labours. But unhappily the harvest was small: for it is related that part of the seed fell by the way-side and was trodden upon, and the birds of the air came and eat it up. Another part fell upon stoney ground; and being shot up it withered, because it had not moisture. Another part fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up together, choaked it. But the last part fell upon good ground, and being grown up yielded fruit a hundred fold. This mysterious parable, as related by Jesus Christ himself, he was pleased also to expound, and in the exposition you will see, what daily passes before your eyes. The seed, says Christ, is the word of God; and they by the way side are those who hear it: then the Devil comes and takes away the seed, lest believing, they should be saved. They upon stoney ground, are those, who, when they have heard it, receive the word with joy; and these have no

root

root who believe for a while, and in the time of temptation fall back. And that part, which fell upon thorns, are they who have heard, and going away, are entangled with the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that upon good ground are they, who with a good—a very good heart, hearing the word retain it, and with patience bring forth fruit. Behold here the precious advantages of hearing the word of God, as it should be heard; of receiving it as it should be received; because it brings forth fruit a hundred fold, infinite in value, infinite in duration. Besides contemplating the advantages, behold also the sad calamities that flow from hearing it, and neglecting by virtuous actions to bring forth fruit: the Devil comes, and banishing it from the mind, takes possession of his own habitation: temptation comes:—the word of God is forgotten: virtue is weak: all is lost. Next come the friends of Hell, transformed into angels of light—the occupations, the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this world, which choak up the word of God in its bud, and blast it in its birth. Thus the seed intended by the husbandman Jesus Christ, to bring forth fruit that should ripen for eternity, is rendered sterile; and becomes by abuse the evident cause of all the evils and vices, that disgrace Europe this day, and this country in particular. From the grand elevation to which, the word of God cherished, would undoubtedly have raised us; how lowly are we reduced from abusing it! To remedy this abuse for the future, I shall lay before you

First, the excellence of the word of God; and

Secondly, the means of making it profitable to our Souls.

From the knowledge we have, O Lord! of our weakness and inability, do thou assist us by thy powerful grace, that the word of life which I am bound this day to proclaim to thy servants here assembled, may sink deep in their hearts,
reform

reform their lives, and produce fruits worthy of eternal life.

1. The excellence of the word of God, or preaching, will appear from two considerations; first, that it is a real intimation of the will of God, and next, that it is a powerful means of procuring our eternal salvation.

That preaching is an intimation, and the usual channel of conveying to the faithful the will of God, appears from its institution, and from the universal practice of the ministers of the gospel, from the foundation of Christianity. Jesus Christ by his blessed example instituted and afterwards commissioned his Apostles, and all their lawful successors to the end of the world; *go, says he, and teach all nations.* This high commission is what St. Paul means, in writing to the Cor. *Let a man so look upon us, not as men who act in private or common capacity: No; but as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.* And again, *we are therefore Ambassadors of Christ; God as if it were exhorting by us:* that is to say, teaching and instructing by our ministry; and lest any one should imagine that these words were applicable to the Apostles alone, and not equally to their successors; St. Paul tells us, that *our Saviour hath appointed in his Church, some Apostles, some Doctors, some Pastors and others Prophets;* otherwise, men whose province it is to teach and expound unto the flock of Christ, the saving truths of the Gospel. So that, any man who is charged by his lawful superior, with *the ministry of the word,* as St. Paul styles it, is in reality an Ambassador of Christ, inasmuch as he is sent by the representative of Christ upon Earth, the head of the Church by legal authority, to announce unto the people, the kingdom of God. As often therefore, as you hear a man deputed by the Church, announcing the truths of the Gospel, you should look upon his words, and attend to them, as the words of life; because they are in reality

reality the words, which Jesus Christ hath announced unto us, and orders us, in the person of his representative upon Earth, to announce unto others. Let our private failings be what they may; though want of abilities may depreciate some, and frailties others; though much inferior in talents and natural endowments to many of our hearers; we are, notwithstanding all this, *the assistants of God*, as St. Paul expresses it, *in the conversion of souls, and the completing the ministry to the perfecting of the Saints*. Who could have greater failings than the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour compares to so many painted sepulchres, which, at the very time that they exhibit to the eye, the fairest out-side, are nothing within but stench and putrefaction? Yet Christ ordered his disciples to hear them with respect, attention and docility. Why so? because they were seated on the chair of Moses; or in other words, because they were authorised and commissioned to deliver, and explain the law of Moses unto the people. Because holding the chair of Moses, they in the old law, in explaining the prophets, fulfilled that branch of our function under the new, namely preaching the word of God. Let no consideration therefore ever hinder you, from paying a due regard to the word of God. Eloquence indeed is very apt to create and command esteem. The graces of speech, genteel delivery, becoming action, with all the ornaments of discourse, are very pleasing to the mind and ear: but all this when weighed in the scale of reason, is no more than an empty sound; the short-lived work, and insignificant creation of man. Whereas the words of life we deliver from this chair of truth, as ministers of Christ, carry along with them, independently of any care, or industry of our own, the greatest weight and energy; and of course are more worthy our esteem, than the most elaborate productions of any other kind. They are not the words of man, but of Christ, the real

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intimation of his will, and likewise the most powerful means of procuring our eternal salvation.

This we may easily infer from many instances, both in the old and new law. As often as the Jews rebelled against the Almighty, what methods were employed, to recall them from their errors to a just obedience to God? Preaching alone. The Lord always sent them Prophets, that is to say, men full of his own spirit, who possessed that warmth of zeal, which was requisite to upbraid them with their ingratitude, reproach them with their disorders, and lay before them the dreadful consequences that must attend their continuing any longer in their disobedience to God. Upon the frequent and pathetick remonstrances those Prophets made, the Jews seldom or never failed to acknowledge their transgressions, bewail them with bitterness, and sincerely return unto the Lord. This sincere return always did, as it always will, draw down the mercies of Heaven; and as often as they returned, so often were they forgiven. Was it not by preaching, that the Christian religion was established all over the known and habitable world, notwithstanding the opposition it met with from the fury of Hell, the false wisdom of this world, the dreadful war of vice, and the corruption of the heart of man? Yes; it was by the ministry of the word, that the empire of idolatry was overturned, the sway of passion checked and restrained; the domination of sin and error prostrated, and the reign of virtue and godliness, established upon the most solid and unshaken foundations. Read the Epistles of St. Paul, and you will be astonished how many great nations and countries, differing from each other as well in climate, as in their language, laws and customs, have been converted to the faith by his preaching alone. At the two first sermons of St. Peter, you are told by St. Luke, that three thousand
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were converted at the one, and five thousand at the other. But how many thousands of thousands, did not twenty four years of his assiduous apostolic labours; and the collected labours in preaching and teaching the College of Apostles, in the different regions of the world, bring in to the fold of Christ? What wonders have been done in Asia, by the preaching of St. Francis Xavier and even at home by St. Patrick? Is it not by the preaching of a few Apostolic men, that new and large additions are daily made, both in the East and West-Indies, to the spiritual kingdom of Christ? There is not any year of our lives, but thousands of souls are brought over by the preaching of the gospel, from the darkness of idolatry or infidelity in which they had been buried, *to the admirable light of faith*, as St. Paul calls it. Is it not by preaching, that the spirit of religion is nourished and kept alive, among those who had imbibed its principles in their earliest infancy? Wherever preaching is obstructed, religion is on the decline. It droops and languishes, like a dying flame, which for want of nourishment, grows fainter and fainter, until reduced at length so low, as barely to subsist: but soon as the word of God is restored, religion revives and shines in full lustre; as the morning sun which appears more bright and beautiful, because it lay concealed for some time from our sight. Consult your own experience on this head, look back into those times, when the word of God was scarcely heard. What a situation was religion in? If since, there be any change, attribute the glory to none but God; for as the Apostle says, *it is neither he that plants, nor he that waters the tender plants, but God alone that gives the increase*. The providence of God is then the great principle that, directing the operations of his holy word on the hearts of men, brings about a thorough change and reformation in morals, and finally becomes the great means of

their salvation. To a sincere conversion, my brethren, and of course to salvation, what are usually the two greatest obstacles? Is it not blindness in the understanding and corruption in the heart; which frequently increase to that degree, as to make us love and cherish the disorders we are slaves to? Now certainly the word of God is a most powerful means of removing those obstacles, as it is clear, that nothing is more capable of banishing all darkness and ignorance from the mind, since we are thereby instructed in every part of our duty towards God, our neighbour and ourselves. Is it not from the pulpit you are told bold truths, which a certain decency would prevent uttering upon other occasions? Here you have been told before, and I tell you again, that your lives are in constant opposition to the maxims of Christ; and that whilst you continue to live as you do, you can have no claim to the kingdom of God. Is it not from this chair of truth you are informed, that the over-charges you make in your dealings, your conniving at the frauds and injustices of others, adulterating your goods, or perhaps using false weights and measures, are so many criminal actions, which if you refuse to make a just reparation for, you can never enter the kingdom of Heaven? Is it not from the Pulpit you are told, in the words of St. Paul, that *all adulterers, all drunkards and blasphemers, all covetous and rapacious men*, that is to say, the unjust invaders of their neighbour's property, *will never enter the kingdom of God*? Is it not by preaching you are instructed, that in order to be saved, it is not enough to refrain from certain gross vices, such as murder, adultery and theft (from which in general the very Pagans themselves refrain) but you must likewise practice the virtues prescribed by the Gospel—humility, charity, meekness, self-denial, the love of God above all things, and of your neighbour as yourself? Is it not by the word of

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of God, that the sinner's heart is roused, alarmed, stormed amidst its criminal enjoyment, and at length rescued from all its disorders? Here all the prevailing, endearing motives of religion are blended and united together to face sin, and to engage the sinner to forsake his evil ways, and return unto the Lord. One time we lay before the woe-worn, oppressed mortal, before feeble infirmity and pining misery, a lively picture of the unspeakable joys of Heaven; the torrents of delights that wait for them above; where the just and the good, where patient suffering and true piety, are to be crowned and immersed for ever in the liveliest extacy; and beseech them to consider, if such great and incomprehensible felicity is not worthy all their cares, their woes, their sufferings, their patience and their piety. Another time, we transport the sinner in idea, into the flaming gulph of Hell, and give him thereby room to reflect and to see how great the folly and madness is, to purchase eternal misery and sufferings, amidst ever living, all devouring and yet never consuming flames, for the short-lived pleasure of one moment's sinful enjoyment. Now we remind you, of all that God hath suffered for your salvation; of the death and passion of Jesus Christ your Saviour; we reproach you withal for being so blind, or so perverse, as to defeat his merciful views by rushing headlong into perdition, notwithstanding the blood of a God that was shed for you on the cross, whereof the least drop in the opinion of divines, was enough to save a thousand sinful and corrupted worlds.

Now my brethren, I leave yourselves to judge, if a sinner must not be deaf to all the suggestions of grace, and blind to the light and principles of faith, to resist such pressing motives of conversion. *The word of God, says St. Paul to the Hebrews, is quick and effectual, more penetrating than any two-edged sword, and piercing even unto the dividing of the soul and spirit.* Besides those inherent qualities, a

special and particular grace always attends the hearing of the word of God. As it is most certain, that all the preaching in the world cannot convert a soul, without the assistance of Heaven; so it is an undoubted principle, that there are very special assistances annexed to preaching: for Jesus Christ says to his disciples, *'tis not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* It follows therefore that the arts of persuasion, or the flowers of eloquence, or the figures of speech, or *the studied expressions of human wisdom*, as St. Paul calls them, are not the means by which the ministers of Christ can expect to do good: No; but by virtue of the cross, or that grace which was merited by Jesus Christ upon the cross. We may indeed move and strike the air, but it is the spirit of God alone, that produces the victorious sound and strikes the heart. This divine assistance, so indispensably necessary for doing good, is always bestowed or offered, by that God, who instituted preaching as a means to establish and promote his spiritual kingdom upon Earth. Whilst the ministers of the Gospel announce the truths of salvation unto the ear, the spirit of God descends into the heart, to make it docile to the outward sound and vibrate to his holy grace. Hence arise these pious emotions, you always feel more powerful, during the ministry of the word, than upon other occasions; a sincere sorrow for sin; a strong resolution of renouncing it for ever; a more perfect love of God, and the warmest desires of eternal happiness. Seeing therefore that the word of God is of the greatest virtue and efficacy, how comes it to pass, it does not produce this hundred-fold mentioned in the Gospel? For the very same reason, that in Physics, the best remedies are often unproductive of any effects, either because of the indisposition of the patient, or the abuse of the remedy. The word of God is very capable of producing the choicest fruits of justice: nevertheless it is
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very often frustrated in its effects, by the abuse we make of it, as I shall briefly lay before you in the second part of this discourse.

II. A part of the seed which the farmer, or husbandman, went out to sow, fell by the way-side, and a part of it on a bad and unfruitful soil. Thus there are many Christians who never put themselves in the way of hearing the word; or hear it with such dispositions of the mind, as must deprive it of its effects. Now the way to make the word of God profitable to our souls, is, 1st, to hear it; and, 2dly, to hear it with a spirit of religion.

Happy are those, says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *that hear the word of God*; but how few are they to whom this happiness extends! Is not every little trifle enough to hinder the Christians of our days, especially the genteeler part, from assisting at the word of God? The hindrance one time, is, a party of pleasure they cannot break; another time, an entertainment for friends they cannot disappoint: at other times, a certain indolence, or rather criminal laziness, to quit a warm, comfortable apartment, and appear in the open air; or, at another time, a strong apprehension of incommoding their very nice persons in a croud, and seeing the economy of a genteel dress ruffled and disordered by the indiscretion or rudeness of the vulgar. Very often it is a positive contempt for the ministers of Christ: for what can be more common than to hear people expressing themselves in this manner: "who is to preach to-day?"—Such-a-one.—"Poh! flat, flat; dry like a chip. For my part, I'll not go hear him. I don't like his manner. There is neither elegance in his style, nor connection in his thoughts, nor solidity in his proofs, nor grace in his delivery. All he says is no more than a heap of pious thoughts thrown confusedly together." But supposing the reverend Pastor, the representative of God, whom you are thus pleased to represent, still less adorned with the profane trappings

of human erudition, yet it is the word of God he announces, and the word of God is attended with particular blessings, as you have heard Christ say: *happy are those that hear the word of God.* By an inversion of reasoning we may also say, unhappy are they who do not hear the word of God: but I say, unhappy is the man whose proud heart and censorious tongue withdraw him from hearing the word of God; because, the word of God, being in itself magnificent and sublime, stands not in need of human embellishments, although they may be applied: censuring, therefore, a preacher, is very unbecoming a Christian, who should listen with meekness to the minister of Christ, and hear his words as the words of Christ: For what need is there, or why should fine language or the niceties of composition be used, in telling you, you are daily running on in the broad and spacious road which directly leads to eternal perdition? What need is there of fine language or the niceties of composition, to tell you, that a great many pagans would blush to be guilty of the shameful excesses of intemperance, and lust, and fraud, that a great many of you daily fall into? What need of fine language or nice composition, to tell you, that the Heathens themselves treat their false Gods; their deaf, dumb, and blind Gods; their Gods made by hands out of sticks and stones—with vastly more respect than many Christians do the name, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ? They respect their Gods, and honour them: we, the adorers of the one only and true God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who neither had a beginning, nor will have an end, and is infinite in all his attributes; we dishonour this God by our crimes; we even attack him upon his throne, by our imprecations or cursing; we defy his vengeance, and challenge his power. To tell you this is the high road to Hell, requires neither fine language or nice composition: nor, in fine, to tell you, that those nations among whom the light of faith shines not,
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are more honest in their dealings, less envious of their neighbour's prosperity, more humane and compassionate to their fellow creatures' distress, than a great many of those who are reared in the Church of Christ from their infancy. The Prophets of old, when commissioned by God, and sent to the Jews, how did they act? Plain men, sometimes chosen from among the shepherds, unknown in worldly, but rich in heavenly wisdom: they told the Jews they were sent by Almighty God, to inform them of the ways of salvation. They reproached them with the various disorders of their lives, and threatened them with the judgments of God. They intreated and beseeched them to renounce their sinful ways and return unto the Lord; giving at the same time the strongest assurances of forgiveness. Is not this what the ministers of Christ daily do in the present dispensation? And although the form of their discourses should not be acceptable to the delicacy of this corrupted age, they certainly perform their own part: even perhaps with more fruit, than by pursuing any over-nice methods, for this very plain, but convincing reason, that truth never shines brighter than in the plainest dress. Do you then, my brethren, I beseech you, as the Prophets did the Jews of old; I beseech you be mindful to act your own part, by attending assiduously on the word of God: otherwise you certainly will be brought to a very severe account for your neglect, at the tribunal of Christ. Every sermon is a grace, on which perhaps your conversion depends. Yet how many refuse those graces from the hand of God! What's the consequence?—that these sermons will be the very cause of their reprobation: for Jesus Christ says in the Gospel of St. John, *He that receiveth not my word, hath one to judge him. The words which I have spoken, shall judge him at the last day. Again, he that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear not, because you are not of God.* How much then have those to answer for, who

never hear the word of God! Let them remember the dreadful words of the Holy Ghost, by the Prophet Isaias, *my word shall not return empty unto me*: that is to say, it will serve to shew the unbounded mercies of God, by bringing forth fruits of conversion in this life, or to display his inflexible justice by eternal punishments in the next.

But it is not enough to hear the word of God assiduously; you must likewise hear it with proper dispositions of the mind: for the word of God as our Saviour says, is a seed, which cannot fructify, if it be not received in a fit and suitable soil. If therefore you wish to reap any benefit from this heavenly seed, you must prepare your hearts for receiving it—by imploring the assistance of Heaven, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and beseeching the Almighty to make it profitable to your souls—by giving the word of God a due attention of the mind, and not suffering yourselves to be distracted or carried away by vain curiosity, or loose imaginations—by putting on a firm resolution to carry the instructions you hear into execution; so as to make them the rule of your whole conduct. Instead of behaving in this manner, people generally come to a sermon, either to criticise the preacher, to be seen in public, or to see. An hour now grows heavy on their hands, and to pass it away—to get rid of it is desirable. Come, say they, “come, let us go to the sermon: let us see how the preacher will act. It is not easy to speak long to one point without deviation.” With such dispositions, it is no way surprising the word of God should produce little fruit. They come to the temple of God, as to a temple of Satan, I mean a play-house, and with the same dispositions, not instruction but amusement. Is it surprising, then, that the word of God should produce little effect? Is not preaching, or announcing the word to Christians of this disposition, sowing the most fruitful seed in the most barren soil, where it must necessarily decay, rot and die? Others there are who hear the word of God assiduously, with attention

tion and piety; but afterwards neglect it so far as never to carry it into execution. The moment they quit the house of God, all is over. The instructions they received are vanished from their minds, or overwhelmed and drowned amidst the various cares and solitudes of life. The seed with those, falls among thorns, *and the thorns, growing up together, choke and destroy it.* "The preacher," they say, "has acted his own part: it is his business to arraign publicly, and lash severely the vices of the age; to be talking always of heaven and hell: but still he knows not the world. Every man must mind his business and affairs." Why not; but mind them in such a manner, as not to hurt or prejudice your souls. Your salvation is your first—your chief business. It is the preacher's business to decry vice, and promote the empire of virtue and godliness: but it is your business not only to hear his instructions, but to put them in practice upon every occasion. For, *it is not those that hear to the Law, says St. Paul, that shall be justified; but those that fulfil it.* Wherefore, as often as you hear the preacher declare, that whoever lives in a state of sin, either by running into intemperance or lust, cursing, swearing, or blaspheming the name of the Lord; cheating or oppressing his neighbour, or overlooking the wants of the poor; are all excluded from the kingdom of God, and liable to eternal fire: look into yourselves and see if you are not guilty of any one of these crimes; and if so, reform immediately and be converted to the Lord your God. This is receiving the word of God in a fruitful soil, which produceth a hundred-fold, and laying a most solid foundation for eternal happiness. For as Christ our Saviour saith in the Gospel, *He that heareth my word, and fulfilleth it, shall be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock: Although the winds blew and the storms raged and torrents dashed with violence against it; yet as the house was built upon a firm foundation, it remained unmoved amidst the dreadful shock.* Even so, if you my brethren, not only hear,

hear, but fulfil the word of God, you shall be settled upon the rock, so as to be able to withstand all the assaults of your enemies—the corruption of the world, the frailty of the flesh, and all the malice and fury of Hell. Then shall you say with the Royal Prophet, *thy word, O Lord, like a bright flame, guides and directs my steps, through the dark and intricate windings of this life: it enlightens the understanding, and gives the true and real wisdom to those of the meanest capacity. Like a fiery dart, it inflames the soul and excites it powerfully to the practice of righteousness.* Hitherto, we confess it with sorrow, we have been extremely neglectful of the word of God; but knowing it now to be one of the most valuable blessings that Heaven can bestow, and a most powerful means of salvation, we shall be more constant and assiduous in hearing, and more diligent in forming our lives thereupon; to the end, that after bearing the *hundred-fold* fruits of justice upon earth, we may at the end of life be admitted, to contemplate the divine word, face to face,—Jesus Christ, the lively image and bright effulgence of divinity in his heavenly kingdom, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N X.

ON THE SERVICE OF GOD:

*Render therefore to God the things that are of
God.*

Mat. 22. ch. 21. v.

ALL the duty of man is reducible to three heads, what we owe to God, our neighbour and ourselves. But the first is the greatest of all, not only as it has an immediate relation to the divinity, but likewise as it comprehends the rest; for if we acquit ourselves properly of what is justly due to the Almighty God, we certainly must fulfil every obligation, so as to leave no material duty undischarged. Should you ask me, with the Royal Prophet, *Is he not our God, and if he be, can he stand in need of any thing we possess?* And should you follow up that question by another, what then is it that appears due from mortals unto the Almighty? St. Paul answers, that, in general, what is due from mortals unto the Almighty, are *honour, glory and praise*. By ten thousand titles do we owe this homage to our God, as our Creator and Redeemer, as our hope and reward, as our protector, conservator and the kind giver of all good gifts; but to be more particular on this subject, we shall see in the 10th ch. of Deut. What the spirit of God declares the Almighty requires at our hands, *that we fear the Lord, and walk in his ways, and that we serve the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls*. Here we are commanded in the first place to fear him; (this one sentence I must observe is a summary

ry of the whole christian religion,) this salutary fear of his power and of his justice, will necessarily prompt us to forsake sin, and of course *walk in his ways*, the ways of grace and virtue. Having forsaken sin and entered the ways of grace and virtue, it is moreover necessary *that we serve the Lord our God with all our hearts*; that *all* the powers, faculties and senses of our bodies, be directed to the honor, glory and praise of our great and good God; and that they be accompanied by *all* the affections, propensities and desires of our souls. This is the duty clearly marked out for us by the Holy-Ghost in the foregoing sentence from the book of Deut. and it is precisely this duty, which in after ages God himself speaking to sinners upon Earth, to the Scribes and Pharisees, laid down for his faithful servants, *render therefore to God the things that are of God*. The great end and universal destination of man, is to fulfil this duty. For this purpose, and for this alone, has man been created and introduced into this world. But amidst the general war maintained between principle and action, duty and conduct, very few there are who square their lives by this great and universal rule. We all admit in speculation, (but speculation is a dry and barren soil, where brambles and briars, not virtues, vegetate) in speculation we admit that Almighty God is indisputably the great master of all; if so, I require to know with the Royal Prophet *where is the honor that is due to him; where the deference that should be paid unto his supreme laws?* If the Almighty be the great master of all, why do we not prove ourselves his true and obsequious servants, by fulfilling the duties of his service? The service of God is unhappily a term without a meaning; for we all possess it, and few or none fulfil it. The service of God is still that term which of all others carries the most solid, the most profound, the most important meaning; a term that involves all the interests that are or should be dear to mankind;

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kind; a term which the church of God calls on me this day to explain to you, according to the exposition of the Holy-Ghost, in the double capacity you are required to serve the Almighty God; namely *with all your hearts, and with all your souls*. In obedience therefore to her commands, you will attend me carefully in the consideration, first of the motives which should induce us to serve Almighty God; and secondly, the manner in which he requires to be served by us.

I. Among the many motives for serving the Lord which press upon the mind, the most prominent is his supreme power and dominion. Sovereign master of all things by creation, conservation and ultimate destination, the Lord has an undoubted right to command, and what he commands every creature is visibly obliged to fulfil. Now the Almighty God commands us to serve him, as appears from many places in Holy-writ, in particular from the 10th ch. of Deut. where he says *thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him alone*. Nothing can be more reasonable than to serve the Almighty; for if subjection be due to power in general, as it really is, how much more is it due to the supreme, independent, uncontrollable power of a God? As supreme master of all things, the Almighty could forcibly have tied us down to a constant compliance with his holy will, as may be easily inferred from the brute and insensible part of the creation. For is there any one thing which falls within our knowledge or observation, that does not continually fulfil the purposes for which it was created? That glorious orb of light, the sun, ceases not and will not cease 'till time shall be no more, to enlighten the planets that roll around it according to the different phases they present to his rays, thus producing with us the alternate changes of days and nights and seasons, summer heats and winter colds; and thus for near six thousand years has that creature been fulfilling
exactly

exactly and without deviation the great end for which it was made. In like manner the Moon and Stars perform for us, the same kind offices by night, which the sun does by day, and thus fulfil one great end of their creation. View well the earth whereon you stand: In winter its vegetating powers are suspended; in spring they open and push forth various fruits for the support of man and all the animals of the land; in summer those fruits are matured, and stored in Autumn. Thus, ever faithful to the great hand that made it, and ever regular in fulfilling the end for which it was made, this deaf and dumb and blind creature earth, will always be a standing monument of reproach to man, endowed with reason and noble faculties, because these faculties and that reason instead of being devoted and employed in the great end for which they were bestowed—the service of God, are daily and almost constantly busied in offering him some indignity or insult. Had Almighty God been pleased to exert his supreme power and dominion over us, it is unquestionable, he could have subjected us like the brute ox of the field, to an uniform obedience to his holy laws. But he has not thought proper to do so. He has been pleased in creating to endow us with free will; and to direct that free will to avoid evil and pursue good; he has also been pleased to confer reason or understanding upon man; in order that he might be served and obeyed by man as a free agent, possessed of liberty to offer or withhold the homage we owe him, by all the claims of creation and redemption. Now nothing can reflect more honor upon the divinity than that tribute of adoration and homage which, being in our power to withhold, we always pay from our own free will and election. Subjection of any kind, would show the power and dominion of God over all his creatures; but free and unconstrained adoration proclaims aloud not only his greatness but his goodness. By the one the Almighty would certainly appear the first principle

ciple and great master of all things; but by the other he not only appears, but is acknowledged willingly in that character. However this privilege of liberty, or free agency that man alone is endowed with, among all the creatures that we know of under the sun, does not by any means take away or lessen the obligation he lies under of serving the Almighty, as supreme Lord of all things. No: the Almighty still tells him aloud, *thou shalt adore the Lord thy God and him alone shalt thou serve.* It is true he does not enforce this command with violence, compulsion or irresistible force; but he does it in a manner suitable to our free will and the constitution of all free agents—by proposing eternal rewards and eternal punishments; eternal rewards for those who comply, and eternal punishments for those who refuse obedience to that command of adoring and serving the Lord our God.

The Lord our God is not only the great master of all, but the greatest of all masters. St. John proclaims him in his Rev. to be *the King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and the Holy-Ghost declares, *it is by him that Kings and Princes reign.* So that he in reality is the fruitful source from whence all power and authority derive. All that is grand or beautiful in nature, wonderful or stupendous in magnitude, correct or perfect by harmony or order; all that pleases, that delights, that fills the eye or captivates the heart, all I say are but as sparks emanating from the Divinity. From him alone they flow, as being the fountain and source of all that is great or grand, sublime or beautiful. And in this character has not the Lord an undoubted right to our services? There is a certain noble spirit of rectitude in man, which readily submits to true and unfeigned greatness. But where is this true and unfeigned greatness to be found? No where but in the divinity, All the rest is but a vain shew of some faint and borrowed shades of greatness. All the rest is downright emptiness,
a mere

a mere nothing. Why then my brethren, is it not to the great and omnipotent God that we devote our hearts and services? Is he defective in any title to make him deserving both of the one and the other? As our creator he called us into existence and gave us a being, not of beasts, but of the human kind: As our father he upholds and provides for that being, by settling and fixing us in the world and supplying all our necessary wants; and as our God, he holds within our view and exhibits within our reach, immortal life, immortal joys, immortal glory for ever and ever in the kingdom of Heaven. If these are not claims on you to serve the Lord, and obey his holy laws, say, I beseech you, what are? He does more. When you forsook the Lord by sin, he called on you by his ministers and tenderly invited you to return to him by repentance, promising *were your sins as red as scarlet, he would make them as white as wool*; and in doing so, he has done a greater act than the creation of the world. Say then where is he defective in every claim to your homage and to your service? Say then who is it or what is it has so good a right to the service of your heart? Rather let me ask, is there any thing to be found besides God alone, worthy the heart and the affections of man? To engage in the service of renowned and distinguished Princes, is a favorite pursuit of people in this world: To serve under great and distinguished warriors—mighty men of fame, is the highest ambition of noble and generous souls. But what is all the greatness of the world, compared to the greatness of God? *Are not all the nations upon earth as if they were not in his sight?* says the Royal Prophet. Why then do we not declare for the service of God, if greatness be a motive as it really is? But Almighty God has other claims on our service. He is not only the greatest master we can serve, but undoubtedly the best of all masters.

If mankind were always attentive and obedient to the dictates of reason, there would be no neces-

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sity to lay before them any incitement to the service of God. The dictates of reason must clearly shew that every creature should live in a continual subjection to the all-powerful hand which gave it being, and preserves its existence. But as we are all born with various irregular passions which always counteract and very frequently darken the light of reason, so as to lead us astray from the paths of truth and righteousness, it became necessary to propose unto man such inducements to virtue, as must counterbalance his natural depravity and weakness. Now Almighty God has effectually set up this counterbalance, by proposing rewards to all those that would faithfully serve him; and those rewards are of such a nature as must command the attention of the most inconsiderate minds, and fix the affections of the most worldly hearts. Of these rewards some are confined to this life, others to the life to come. Respecting this life what the Almighty promises his true and faithful servants, is, not exemption from pain or suffering, from sickness, woes or wants, not from oppression or injustice, nor violent and repeated attacks from the great enemy of mankind, but inward peace and tranquillity of mind, as appears from what Jesus Christ lays down in the Gospel, *take my yoke upon you and you shall find rest unto your souls.* This peace of mind is undoubtedly the greatest blessing we can enjoy in this life, as it maintains the soul in a constant composure under the heaviest afflictions, and banishes those fears and anxieties which frequently startle and terrify the hardest sinners, even amidst their pleasures, by laying before them the dreadful picture of their sins and the more dreadful punishments that must ensue. This was the great gift that Jesus Christ conferred on his Apostles after his resurrection, whereby they were enabled to bear with tranquillity and even sustain with pleasure all the persecutions and sufferings that Hell could vomit forth. *Peace be with you: sweet, delectable, happy peace! a blessing the more valuable as it is not to be purchased*
by

by any thing this world can bestow; a blessing frequently unknown to the Monarch upon the throne, to the conqueror amidst his trophies, to the rich man amidst his opulence, to the man of pleasure amidst the most refined and delicious enjoyments; a blessing in fine so grand, so inestimable, that to obtain it no one but would exchange for it the most valuable possession of life. This blessing so valuable in itself, this peace which fills the heart of man upon earth, and makes him anticipate the consolations of the blessed in Heaven, the unerring word of God promises to all those who love and serve the Lord with fidelity. *The kingdom of God*, says St. Paul, *is peace and joy in the Holy-Ghost*. Sinners drunk with guilty joys, may pretend to inward peace and tranquillity of mind. But believe them not. Sooner will the Lamb and Lion, the Wolf and Sheep associate, than the peace I speak of and guilt reside together. The spirit of truth declares, that tranquillity of mind is a weak and groundless pretention with sinners: although they may frequently discourse of peace and spiritual quiet, *yet it is far from them, as it resides in the hearts of the just and righteous alone*. Of this inward peace and tranquillity, this spiritual comfort and consolation, was the Royal Prophet truly sensible, when he cried out, *that one day spent in the service of the Lord was preferable to a thousand years*. In other words, that all the pleasures this world could afford for a thousand years, were not comparable to the pure and holy joys which the peace of Jesus Christ conveys in one day, to the souls of the just. Already have I hinted to you whence this inward peace and tranquillity proceed. They proceed from the influence of divine grace; from the unction of the Holy-Ghost; from an inward consciousness of being in favour with God, and consequently entitled to the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven. This sweet joy and pure delight which the Royal Prophet says, Almighty God imparts to those who truly serve him, is further supported

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supported by St. Paul, *the spirit* (of God) *giveth testimony unto our spirit* (or soul) *that we are the children of God.* However you are to observe, this consciousness of being in favor with God, can never amount to an absolute certainty. No: this were the height of presumption, because *no man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred* in the eyes of God, according to the expression of St. Paul. Nevertheless it cannot be denied, but that this inward testimony of the spirit is so strong, as to banish all these dreadful apprehensions which torment sinners continually, and hinder them from tasting the inexpressible pleasure of being united unto God. Nothing can be more pleasing to the mind, or contribute more to the real happiness of man, than a situation in which he is conscious of being in favor with Almighty God. This happiness is the certain consequence of serving God, the great and inestimable reward he confers even in this life on all those who love and serve him. The other rewards concern the life to come, and consist in the joys and glory of the kingdom of Heaven.

Here let me invite you to raise your thoughts to sublimer views than what this world affords, in order to conceive the unbounded goodness of Almighty God. What is it he promises all those who serve him and obey his laws? *O Heavens, be ye amazed and astonished at the sound!* What doth he promise? To seat them upon thrones and make them reign eternally with himself in his heavenly kingdom. Weigh well within yourselves the extent of this bounty and clemency. Almighty God as supreme master of all things, had an undoubted right to our services without promising the least reward. For he that plants the vineyard, that tills or cultivates the field, has an unquestionable right to the fruit thereof; yet, the Lord God was too generous and good to require our services on the score of right, and was graciously pleased to promise eternal happiness as a reward for all who

truly

truly serve him. This eternal happiness has been promised through Christ our Lord. In him and through him our services are crowned with eternal rewards; not only our services in general, but every action in particular, and even our very desires and affections. It is impossible to conceive any thing equal to this bounty of Almighty God: but incomprehensible it is indeed, that this great bounty and wonderful goodness of the Lord, makes little or no impression on the heart of man. Almighty God has the strongest titles imaginable to our services—his power, dominion, inconceivable bounty and goodness; and still we refuse to serve him upon any title whatsoever. After Joshua had introduced the Israelites into the Holy-land, he assembled them together, and recounted before them in few words, the many extraordinary blessings they had received from the Almighty hand of God. He reminded them of the many signal miracles that had been wrought in their favor, on their departure from Egypt, their crossing the Red Sea, and during the time of their wandering in the desert: then he concludes with these remarkable words; *O Israelites! do you now yourselves choose the master you are henceforward to serve and obey: either the great God that has been so bountiful to you, or the Gods of nations, from whom you have received nothing, and have nothing to receive. May I not now with a great deal of Justice make you the same proposal, and say, look all around you and see what master you have the best right to serve and obey? If you can find any being equal to the Almighty God, in power, greatness or goodness, dispose of your services as you think proper. But if you cannot, why do you refuse repaying to the Lord your God the great debt you owe him, of faithfully serving him for evermore? Is he not worthy your services? Has he not every claim on our services that can constitute a title? As Sovereign, benefactor, master, Lord and father, we owe him not only our services but our very lives.*
Elsewhere

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Elsewhere what can be found but ingratitude, infidelity, continual disappointment and in the end misery. I appeal to your own experience, my brethren, for the justice of this remark. For many years have you been serving the world—slaves to the world: for what purpose? Where are now the fruits of all your labours? Some perhaps may boast of having acquired large fortunes. But how have you acquired them? Perhaps by wading through toils, and difficulties, and dangers, or over-leaping the bounds of justice and setting conscience adrift. A while hence shall Jesus Christ ask you those questions and you must answer him. And a while hence say if you can, what will become of these fortunes? say what will become of yourselves? your fortunes shall pass into other hands, your bodies into dust and ashes from whence they came, and your immortal souls where the rigorous justice of God shall appoint. This true and awful prospect, is what this world alone affords for all our services. Let us then give them another bent, where disappointment, anguish or deception are unknown: let us turn at length and serve Almighty God, who can, who will, who has promised to make us eternally happy, if we but faithfully serve him here on Earth. To discharge your duty on this subject effectually, so as to make you entitled to the promises of Almighty God, it is necessary you should know the nature of the services he requires at your hands, which will engage our consideration in the second part of this discourse.

II. When Joshua, the great leader of Israel and legislator after Moses, was about to depart from this world, he convoked his people and among the instructions he gave, as laid down in the 24th ch. of his book, he specially enjoins them by a particular inspiration of the Holy-Ghost, *do you fear the Lord, and serve him with a perfect and most sincere heart.* Now serving the Lord with a perfect and most sincere heart, implies two things—that we serve him with fidelity and constancy.

Serving

Serving God with fidelity is serving God alone; and, that him alone we are obliged to serve, appears from the Gospel, where Jesus Christ says, *thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve.* In the Gospel likewise our blessed Saviour further declares, that *no man can serve two masters*, because he must necessarily hate and despise one or the other of the two; as the obedience the one requires is utterly inconsistent with the submission due to the other. Almighty God therefore, having an undoubted and unalienable right to our services, cannot endure the least division to be made of our hearts. As we owe all we are and all we possess, as well as all we expect or hope for, to the unbounded goodness of God, he requires we should devote ourselves entirely to his service. To do otherwise, is robbing him of that part of his glory he is most jealous of—the sacrifice of our hearts: As the Holy-Ghost says, *it is committing a spiritual and sacrilegious rapine, than which nothing can be more abominable in the eyes of the Lord.* Nevertheless, my brethren, is not this infidelity in the service of the Lord, the very crime you are most commonly guilty of? Does it not appear by your conduct that you would willingly serve God and the world at one and the same time? I appeal to facts. Almighty God calls on you to restrain your eyes (those inlets of vice to the soul) and your other senses by the laws of self denial, and yet play-houses, public shews and places of public amusements (as they are erroneously called) are constantly filled with Christians, who thus pamper and nourish those corrupt senses which we are bound to keep under, and instead of mastering them, they master us, and gradually usurp the total empire of the heart, which we are bound to give to God alone. You do not intend or wish to forsake the Lord by complying with some of the customs of the world. Where those customs are innocent (but which of them are innocent?) you may be excusable. But by exposing yourself to temptation, you divide
your

your heart between God and the world ; and by adopting the false maxims, the false notions, the sinful ways and corrupt practices of the world- you necessarily forsake the Lord your God, because *no man can serve two masters*. To descend more to particulars, let us consider how people in life acquit themselves of the fidelity they owe to the service of God. The citizen complying with the false maxims of the world readily swallows oaths of office, which conveying but a momentary vibration to the mind, are readily forgotten and as readily infringed and violated. " But you will say they " are only oaths of office, mere matter of course, " no body keeps them." Will that excuse you before Jesus Christ? The merchant in invoicing or outvoicing or valuing his goods swears not always to strict truth ; or what is equally criminal, complying with the usual mode of doing business, he countenances by his silence the false reports made by his captains or masters of vessels at the custom-house, respecting the quantum of goods his vessel contains, to which the captain or master must swear, when perhaps the merchant or owner shall at the very same time, have concealed goods on board, for the purpose of smuggling, or blinding by bribes, the officers from doing their duty. The laws of God in those cases, and his holy service are put aside. But to proceed : Men in business or in a trading line, who pretend to be Christians and to serve Almighty God in that character, very seldom fail to follow the wicked ways of life, in grasping at every advantage that interest presents to view, as often as occasion offers ; and to justify by their cleverness what the Lord God shall judge and condemn them for, on the great day of reckoning. So many and various are the instances wherein the service of God is set aside in this case, that every trader must see on reflection, where and how far this remark attaches particularly to himself. It is a general custom and you all know it, that whenever or wherever a number of decent people meet and assemble to enjoy themselves, nothing is more usual, even fashionable, than to introduce such subjects as

must necessarily offend, and shock every modest ear. In such cases as these how is a Christian to conduct himself? Let him recollect the service he owes to God, and obedience to his holy laws: let him declare publicly for God and his holy laws: let him rise up boldly and arraign the corruption of the age; but discretion in such conduct must be a leading feature. Nothing short of necessity can justify any conduct whereby charity may be violated, friendly intercourse dissolved, or bitterness created. But where prudence will not allow a broad and open reprobation of improper conduct, silence attended by a certain severity of countenance, especially in the company of men of superior rank, will overawe such unchristian proceedings. Persons who lay great claim to Christianity and pretend to serve the Lord, instead of pursuing the line I have marked out, generally chime in with their company, countenance disorder, blast virtue by immorality, and gently glide along the stream which is rolling them all headlong to the flaming gulph below. It may be asked, is a man under such circumstances as I have mentioned, to offend his company, friends, or distinguished characters in his own house? Surely, if necessary, rather than offend Almighty God. What claim has that company on you, that you should insult the majesty of God, by conforming to their wicked ways?—that you should damn your own soul, from a false principle of fashionable agreement to sin? Was it that company, those friends, these distinguished characters that called you forth from nothing, and gave you existence, a tongue to praise, and power to please, not affront, the great author of your being? Was it that company that redeemed you from the tyranny of Satan, the slavery of original sin, and the eternal punishments due to your personal sins? Is it, in a word, that company that can make you eternally happy; or eternally miserable in the life to come? No, no: if not, why do you relinquish upon such occasions the fidelity you
owe

owe to the service of God at all times and upon all occasions? Why hear the voice of man, before the voice of God? Why, O! why will you gratify the passions of men, to the destruction of your own immortal souls? yet you do so; you frequently do so: but mark the consequence—to be cast out an unworthy servant into exterior darkness, *where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; where the sun never rises, nor any glimpse is ever seen of the glory of Heaven. St. Paul was well convinced of the dangers attending an acquiescence to the ways of life when he said, *were I to please men I should no longer be a servant of Christ*; whence it is plain, if you intend to serve the Almighty God, you must relinquish the wrong opinions of men, forsake their sinful practices, and follow a course different from that they generally follow. The fidelity we owe Almighty God, requires that we never transgress any essential point of his law for any consideration whatsoever; but the prevailing conduct among Christians in our days, shews that this is a theoretical, not a practical principle, and I form that conclusion from the few there are who pay any attention thereunto. Occasion offers, opportunity presents itself of making a good hit in the world, but the laws of God forbid the execution. How does man behave, I speak of men in general, even those who pretend to serve the Lord? Why, cunning reason starts up the idea, that perhaps the same opportunity again may not occur of raising one's family, removing distress, banishing want. This reasoning becomes conclusive. Conscience must go to sleep. The morality of the gospel must be overleaped, and the occasion embraced; although to compass the end it may be necessary to pursue every iniquitous step that passion and the inordinate love of the world can suggest. But is this serving the Almighty God, and serving him with the fidelity he requires? Is it not rather serving Mammon; that is, the God of interest, the God of riches, the God of this world? And yet Jesus Christ assures us, that *no man can*

serve God and mammon; so that if you adhere to the one, you must necessarily renounce the other. But “these are maxims of the world.” They may be so: but I say, and I speak on the part of God, that no laws, no maxims of the world, should ever induce a Christian to deviate from the laws and maxims of Christ, because it is not by the laws and maxims of the world we are to be judged, but by the laws and maxims of Jesus Christ as laid down in the Gospel. If therefore we do forget these laws or maxims of Christ, either in our conversation or conduct, in our dress or public appearance, we certainly prove ourselves unfaithful servants, and consequently can have no share in Christ or his promises. For to entitle us to the promises of Christ, we must serve him with fidelity and also with constancy.

The Holy-Ghost speaking by the mouth of the wise man (Eccl. 5.) directs, *do thou stand firm in the ways of the Lord*; because, says Jesus Christ in the Gospel, *he that persevereth to the end shall be saved*. If therefore you sincerely intend to secure your eternal happiness (and what object should be so dear to you?) you must take care to walk constantly in the ways of Heaven. For the Almighty God is too good and merciful to abandon at the last hour, on which our salvation depends, those who had served him faithfully during the foregoing part of their lives. These are not my promises, but those of the spirit of God, who speaks in the Revelations, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life*. This steadiness, this constancy in the ways of God, is the true character of all those that are destined for eternal happiness. But where is this steadiness to be found? what more do the very best of you, than serve Almighty God as it were by starts or fits? On the return of a great festival you all take some pains (I suppose this, because you all should take pains) to be reconciled with the Almighty God; and you continue the exercises of piety and religion for three or four weeks, perhaps not so many days, at the end of which

which time you never fail to fall back to your usual courses of life. But why this inconstancy? why these continual changes, vicissitudes and variations? Is Almighty God more deserving of your services at one time, than at another? Do not the same motives always subsist, which influenced you to serve God at one particular season of the year? Is he not at all times our God and our redeemer? our master and protector? the author of our being and the only source of our happiness? If therefore we think it an indispensable obligation, at one time to love him, to worship, to serve him *in spirit and truth*, according to St. Paul, why are we not always governed by the same principles? Remember what our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ says in the Gospel, *he that once puts his hand to the plough and afterwards looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of Heaven*. This looking back, after putting our hand to the plough, or returning to sin after entering the way of virtue, is unhappily the case with each of ourselves in particular. Often have we returned to the Lord, often promised to continue for ever in his service: but these promises we have as often violated. We abandoned his service to serve our vanity, our interest, our passions. Did we but consider the indignity of such conduct, as well as the woful consequences that follow, we should certainly never be guilty of it. The indignity constitutes a crime of high insult to the majesty of the Lord; and the consequence of such crime, is impenitence, reprobation and final perdition. This is the true meaning of what the Apostle St. Jude says, cautioning the faithful by a similitude, *take care you become not like these wandering stars, which are never fixed or regular in their motions, but evermore roving up and down the Heavens; for they are reserved for the most horrid darkness during the whole length of eternity*. Treating on this subject, the most intelligent masters of a spiritual life assure us, that in some measure there are greater hopes of the salvation of the greatest sinners, than of these wavering and un-

settled christians: for the sinner may one time or other return unto the Lord and continue afterwards in favor with him to the end of life; whereas these inconstant men, who are one day with God and another day against him, will certainly be taken out of this world in one of these changes, whilst they are in disgrace with God, and consequently liable to all the dire effects of his wrath and indignation. A misfortune of this kind, dreadful as it is, we have each of us deserved in particular to undergo, for our inconstancy in the ways of the Lord. But he hath been pleased by an excess of goodness to spare us and to offer us this day the means of repentance. This consideration alone should overwhelm us with love and gratitude, and bind us down evermore to his service. Jesus Christ asks, *what will it avail us to gain the whole world, if we lose our souls?* I leave you to answer that question: but I say the only means of saving our immortal souls—our precious souls, purchased by the sufferings of a God, are to serve the Lord: to serve him with fidelity and constancy. Let us therefore this day arm ourselves with a strong resolution, but inviolable, never to depart from the service of the Lord, for any consideration or upon any motives whatsoever. Reject every temptation held out by the world. The world shall pass away and all things therein; and let them pass and perish sooner than we forsake the service of God; sooner than we plunge ourselves into the caverns of eternal night and sorrow. With regard to ourselves, what will the whole world be in a few years, or a few months, perhaps in a few days? Of its empty shews, its vain comforts, not so much then as a shadow will remain. And if so, shall we risk immortality, joy, happiness and our God, for all the world offers us connected with sin? Shall we any longer by our infidelities and inconstancy draw down the full weight of the avenging hand of God, which his tender mercy withholds? Ah! no: but let us profess ourselves this day true servants of the Lord and adhere constantly

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stantly to him unto the end of our lives. Then shall you hear from the mouth of your Redeemer on the last day, these agreeable words, *come thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord. Because thou hast been faithful in small things, I will now place you over many things.* Evermore shalt thou share in all the joys and glory of God. Nevermore shall the tear of woe gush out, nor pain nor sorrow afflict. Evermore shall you be, not supplicating like subjects, but seated as kings on thrones with crowns of glory in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen: Sweet Jesus!—*Amen.*

S E R M O N XI.

O N C H A R I T Y.

Communicating alms to the Saints in their necessities.

Rom. ch. 12, v. 13.

OF all the virtues the Christian religion prescribes, there is not any one the practice of which ought to be more common and more familiar to us than that of charity or alms-giving; not only on account of the excellency of this virtue, which is so closely connected with the love of God, wherein the plenitude of the whole law consists, as St. Paul declares, that it cannot subsist without it; but likewise on account of the many and inestimable advantages which we are assured in holy writ are annexed to, and inseparable from, the proper and judicious distribution of charity. In one place it appears that this divine virtue has the force of appeasing the anger of God, and rendering him propitious unto us. In another, that charity is capable of drawing down the greatest blessings even in this life. Elsewhere we are told by Jesus Christ himself, that *even a glass of water given in his name shall not want its reward: and that if we deal generously with others for his sake, the same will be returned in great, large, and plentiful measures.*—These are promises of rewards, but threats are also held out against those who do not practice the works of charity, as is fully laid down in the Gospel of St. Luke, where the unfaithful steward, puffed up and elated by his prosperity, thought himself perfectly safe whilst acting contrary to all the laws of justice, in squandering away his master's substance. But the master returning and the misconduct

duct being notorious, the steward is brought to account and sentence immediately pronounced, *Thou shalt be no longer steward.* In this parable we have a striking figure of the strict account we shall be brought to at the tribunal of Christ, the supreme and just judge of the living and the dead, for our administration in this life; that is, for the use we make of the substance Divine Providence is pleased to commit into our hands. At present we are very apt to think we can use it as we please, and that possession confers a right which no laws can circumscribe. Almighty God entertains quite different notions; and will make us one day sensible we were no more than stewards or under-agents to Providence in the administration of the property committed to our care. So that if we fail to fulfil the duties of that character by a mismanagement of the means we are possessed of, we must be punished accordingly. It is therefore highly incumbent on each of you in particular to reflect seriously on this subject, and lay your lives under the strictest regulations by following in every point the direction of our Saviour in the Gospel, *to make friends unto yourselves of the mammon of iniquity, who (when you fail) may receive you into the seats of everlasting bliss.* Notwithstanding these strong and unquestionable assurances of the excellence as well as the many blessings that flow from the exercise of charity, very many there are who seem to be no way solicitous about it. Heaven forbid I should mean by this observation to overlook the charitable disposition of several of our inhabitants, who have always their hearts open and their hands stretched forth for the relief of the necessitous and poor. But yet it cannot but be observed that too many neglect the practice of almsgiving, or confine their charity within too narrow bounds. This half performance of an essential duty, as well as the neglect of it, call loudly on the ministers of the Church of God for their best exertions in laying before the faithful the magnitude of their obligation on this head. In making this

general remark I feel how much I am bound by my duty to you, myself, and my God, to examine this heaven-born virtue, charity, and to enforce the practice of it on the grounds of duty and benefit. All duties draw benefits or rewards in their train; but as no virtue is more sublime than the practice of charity, so none draws after it greater blessings upon mortals. We shall see this in detail, by examining with me two distinct propositions wherein you all are most materially concerned:—first, the obligation you lie under of practising charity—secondly, the manner of discharging and the blessings arising from the discharge of this obligation.

I. The obligation of charity, I mean that branch of it which consists in affording relief to your poor and infirm brethren, is grounded on the present dispensation of Divine Providence, and a positive command of the Almighty. Whoever considers the various conditions in this world, must see that some are in the greatest poverty and want, whilst others abound not only with the necessaries and conveniencies of life, but even with its comforts and superfluities. Is it then to be imagined that the Almighty Father of all could have ordained so great a distinction and inequality among men, by favouring a few and overlooking the wants of the rest? No: this were highly inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of a God, the first fruitful cause and universal parent of all things; whose bounty is so great as to provide plentifully in due time for the very birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. All men by nature are the same; subject to the same infirmities, liable to the same wants. Of all the animals of the creation man appears in his primeval state to be the most miserable, the most abject, and the most forlorn. Equally unable to help himself as to call for help, he seems the outcast of the creation. Other creatures come into life with covering and powers to help themselves, but man comes naked, poor and helpless, and immediately proclaims his miseries by his cries. After
charity

charity performs the first offices of life, the poor then become victims to poverty and want, disease and death; whilst their more favoured fellow-creature riots in all the enjoyment of unqualified luxury. Here the poor man, full of sores, calls at the proud man's gate, but he calls in vain—he does not call in vain: the dogs come and lick his sores—there the Christian brute turns his back on human woes. Here we see the innocent little one who never knew a crime, shivering and pining; there the young heir who never knew a want. Where then are the means to smoothen these evils? The necessary funds for maintaining this seemingly abandoned part of the creation? In the hands of the rich and wealthy men of the world; by which disposition the infinite wisdom of God shines forth in the most conspicuous manner. For although he could have supplied the wants of the poor by himself without the intervention of any other, yet he chose to lay this obligation upon the rich, in order to unite the different orders of men in the closest ties, and make the very difference of their conditions instrumental to their eternal happiness; sanctifying the poor by patience and suffering, and the rich by their benevolence and charity to the poor. If then the poor are forced from the misery entailed upon their state to cry out for relief unto the rich, these are no less obliged to hear the cries and relieve the necessities of the poor; by which it appears that the rich man is no less made for the poor, than the poor man for the rich, according to the beautiful remark of St. Augustine, however distant and opposite these two characters may appear. The great chain which unites all mankind in one family, is principally displayed in the mutual exchange of good offices among men; the poor in supplying the comforts of the rich, the rich by charity softening the evils of the poor. It is the poor man by his toils that supplies the profusion of the rich man's table, as well as the splendour of his equipage. The rich in return is bound by charity to soften the evils

evils of his poor brother, and to look to him chiefly when oppressed by poverty, infirmity, nakedness, or want. The providence of God and the wisdom of his ways are seen by this dispensation, whereby the use, not the abuse, are shewn to men, of poverty to the poor, and riches to the rich. In various instances the exercise of this virtue is seen and admired. No country perhaps affords instances of charities better applied, and among these, that late foundation in the capital, the Lying-in Hospital, holds a distinguished rank: but still I say that charity is too limited where the calls are so numerous. It must be acknowledged that no civilized country abounds with more appearance of poverty. The general face of the land is covered, not with the warm cottages of an encouraged peasantry, not with the waving fields and lowing herds of an industrious yeomanry, but in general with miserable hovels, where in several instances the light and the smoke make the same entrance and exit. I will not pretend to say but physical and political as well as moral causes may be assigned for this evil; but I shall never prophane this sacred chair to the discussion of subjects, but those which tend to the formation of the Christian, to which alone my ministry calls me. If we circumscribe our views within the walls of this city alone, how great is the field to call forth the humanity and to exercise the charity of the benevolent and the good? Did you but for one day attend the visitations of our clergy in discharge of their duty, Lord God! what doleful scenes would be seen! Want, sickness, and nakedness would alternately and in various shapes assail your view and strike you with horror. Here are scenes revealed which bashfulness conceals from public view; and pining children calling upon their heart-broken mother for the morsel she has not to give. Waving particular details of distress I shall beg to ask where is the relief? In your pockets. You are commanded in holy writ to *honour the Almighty with your substance*. How so? Because it is
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a real honour and glory unto God to see his providence justified before man. Now the providence of God never appears in a fairer view than when the different orders of men are occupied in assisting each other. Whereas if this mutual assistance be refused, if our brethren are suffered to perish for want of charitable aid, does it not appear that the Divinity must fall under the severe imputation of abandoning the greater part of the human kind by exposing it to misery and want? For this reason the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church in their instructions to the faithful on this subject, never failed to lay it down, not only as a breach of charity, but as a downright injustice and rapine, to refuse assistance to the poor; inasmuch as they are deprived of a portion of wealth which the Almighty put into your hands merely for their subsistence; and the Lord will lay at your door the sufferings which fell upon your brethren for want of that contribution, that charity which you withheld. Thus St. Gregory says, "When we afford
" necessities to the poor we give them nothing of
" ours, but restore them their own; we fulfil a
" debt of justice rather than accomplish a work of
" mercy." Of this the primitive Christians were so far convinced, that they were not satisfied with giving away for charitable uses a part of their substance, but sold all they had, that all might equally benefit by what riches the great and munificent parent of all had blessed them with. Although I am very far from laying down this as a rule, yet it cannot but serve as a severe reproach to a great many who are so selfish and interested as to imagine that all they possess was given them for their sole and separate use, without the least regard to the wants of others. They abound in every thing, yet they think they never have enough, and by centering their thoughts in themselves never look abroad upon that part of mankind which in the views and disposition of Providence were to be maintained by their care and munificence. But let
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men of this inhuman character consider, that the very persons whom they now despise, are, notwithstanding all the vain distinctions of pride and ambition, no less than their own flesh and blood, as the Holy Ghost declares, *do not despise your own flesh*. Let them consider that Almighty God in introducing them into this world, had their happiness no less at heart than that of the highest men in power; and that one day they may be placed with Lazarus in possession of all the glory and riches of Heaven, whilst themselves are sunk with Dives in the deep and gloomy caverns of eternal misery and pain. Let them consider that as they received all they possess by the free gift of the Lord, to make good use of it in this life, so he is at liberty to call back his own and deprive them of this substance by sudden and unforeseen misfortunes. Turn your eyes around and on every side you will behold instances of calamities swallowing up the successful gathering of many years. I do not say that insensibility to the wants of the poor produce always those temporal reverses; because to the deep and impenetrable councils of the Lord no mortal is admitted: but I do say these reverses in life are often the consequences of such flinty conduct. On the other hand it is remarkable that where charity to the poor is a leading feature, even in this life (as an earnest of what will happen in the next) prosperity, tranquillity, and domestic comfort crown that man and his family.

The debt we owe the poor is as positive a debt as any we contract. *To you the poor are given in charge*. Their wants, their sufferings, their miseries we are bound to attend to and relieve.— Unless we discharge these duties we cannot be said to fulfil the law which enjoins us to *love our neighbours as ourselves*, and unless we fulfil the law no hopes remain of ever entering the kingdom of Heaven. How can it be said we love our neighbour or fulfil the law, if our neighbour's wants form no part of our care; or, if knowing his wants we re-
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fuse to relieve him? By our sedulous, watchful care we generally anticipate want in ourselves, and seldom know it but by name. Before pinching cold comes we cover ourselves warm; before hunger comes we eat, and often drink when not thirsty; but the shivering, naked, hungry poor what becomes of them? They are not thought of. "Let Providence take care of them." Yes, Providence will take care of them. He is their father as well as yours, their protector as well as yours, their reward as well as yours, their God as well as yours, and he will punish you for not employing a share of that substance which he has deposited in your hands in removing those wants by acts of charity, and smoothing those evils to which your fellow-creature is liable. This is the true end for which substance has been placed by the Almighty in your hands; first to satisfy the reasonable wants of your families, and after that to give every thing superfluous to the poor. The patrimony of the poor, their property is in your hands. The laws of nature as well as the laws of God demand from you a share of that property in relief of your indigent brother. The false distinctions created by property are removed by charity, and it is by the exercise of this virtue that the views of Providence are fulfilled in conferring great abundance on some, and great wants on others. Had we no other proof for the obligation of charity, than the consideration drawn from those views of the Lord in establishing the different conditions of life, I think it were sufficient for that purpose: but what sets this obligation still in a clearer light is its being expressly laid down in various places in the Mosaic Law, as well as the Law of Grace. In the 15th chap. of Deut. the Lord God speaking to his people, says, *I command you, observe the stern authoritative manner wherein the God-head speaks, I command you to open your hand to your brother in want, and to the poor that dwell in the land you live in.* Our Saviour expresses himself nearly to the same purpose, when speaking to his disciples,

disciples, he says, *as for the rest give alms.* St. Paul enforces the same obligation in the 8th chap. of his second epistle to the Cor. where he orders the faithful *to supply the wants of the poor out of their own abundance.* Now, a refusal on our parts, or a neglect of supplying by charity the wants of the poor, is a violation of a positive command, a downright robbery for which Jesus Christ will one day demand satisfaction. The exercise of charity is rewarded beyond all other virtues, by an immediate internal consolation, which flows from the removal of distress, the relief of want. But should any of you be insensible to the fine feelings that arise from the exercise of charity, or what is of more consequence, to the obligation prescribed by the law, let him attend to the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Mathew, where the breach of this command of charity is the only cause alledged by our Saviour for condemning the reprov'd to Hell-fire, *Go ye accursed into eternal fire; mind the reason—for I was hungry and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me not to drink; I was naked and ye cloathed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not.* Upon asking where they had seen him in this state of suffering, he adds, *Verily I say unto you, so long as ye did it not to one of these little ones, ye did it not to me.* Here you are to observe with St. Augustin, that our Saviour says not, depart from me ye accursed into everlasting fire, because you plundered your neighbour of his property, although this is a crime of great magnitude, and worthy of eternal punishment; but because you refused him the assistance he stood in need of, when it was in your power to grant it, as if the want of charity was the only crime God would notice; or, that it was so heinous in its nature as to absorb and overwhelm all other crimes in the deep vortex of its extensive guilt. Without charity, therefore, you can never expect the mercies of God; and the exercise of charity is the best foundation to expect those mercies. It is not to be questioned but the person who bestows charity

charity is more benefited by the gift, than the person on whom it is conferred; because in the one case the gift only confers relief, limited in extent and short in duration; but it returns benefit to the donor, unbounded in extent and eternal in duration. On the grounds, therefore, of self-interest, it is clear, that charity should be the most familiar with us of all the virtues prescribed by religion. The desire of gain and benefit is the prevailing principle with men in this world. Now what gain, what benefit is comparable to the glory of Heaven, which shall be the reward of those who exercise charity upon Earth, *Come you blessed of my Father and possess the glory prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Was it because they were pious and meek, and humble, and godly, and strictly honest in all their dealings? No; but because charity to their poor, forlorn, suffering fellow-creatures was familiar to them; *I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was naked and you covered me; sick and in prison and you visited me.*

From what has been said it appears very plain that no point of our duty is more strongly enforced in the holy writings than the obligation of charity; and this obligation is supported on one side by the most sublime rewards, and on the other by the most dreadful terrors. It is notwithstanding a lamentable truth, that this obligation is very rarely discharged. You all know several men of good fortunes or easy circumstances, who are almost strangers to this duty of religion. Although the income is large, yet nothing can be spared for the poor. Rank, retinue, equipage, living, gambling, racing, devour all, and devour the poor also. Out of several hundreds spent every year in this manner, not one poor person is relieved! All demands are supplied but those of charity. I recall that expression; all demands are not supplied. Debts are contracted and unpaid. Suits at law are commenced. Distress and trouble, and mortgages, and sales follow, and poverty comes galloping over the property of that man

man who has an unfeeling heart for the miseries of the poor. Stop one instant, and reflect with me how many lives could be preserved by a small share of this criminal extravagance. How many young persons saved from the everlasting stain of infamy and dishonour, which their poverty generally brings upon them! how many heads of families restored to their numerous offspring, who for want of small relief, now lie languishing in the gloomy horrors of the most hideous confinement! Yet the vanity of cutting a dash in the world (as they emphatically call it) prevails so far over these moving considerations, as to leave no room for the performance of any one work of charity, during the whole course of a year. But should I ask this day those dashers in the world, those hearts of iron, which feel not for the woes of humanity, for what purpose did the infinite wisdom of God place so much wealth in their hands? Was it to be wasted in luxury and riot, vice and folly, whilst so many Christians, their flesh and blood, are perishing for want of the necessaries of life? Or what answer will they be able to make the great and dreadful judge of the living and the dead, when he will upbraid them, as St. Ambrose says, before the whole world, in these words, “ Inhuman and unchristian
 “ men, how came you to abuse the riches I be-
 “ stowed upon you? You could line the walls of
 “ your houses with purple hangings and the richest
 “ tapestry; but you never thought of cloathing
 “ your fellow-creature in his distress: you could
 “ even adorn your horses with magnificent trap-
 “ pings, but never would take notice of the rags
 “ several Christians were scarcely half covered
 “ with before your eyes.” Then shall the Lord break forth in words of fire, *Begone from me*: why so, O Lord? Because they felt not for their fellow-creature. They had bowels, not of charity, but of brass; mercy was far from them; *no mercy now for those who have shewn no mercy to others*. Let then the just apprehensions of meeting with such inflexible rigour

rigour from the hands of the Lord rouse up our religion, and bend our attention upon the exercise of this divine virtue, charity, which you now find to be so essential a point in a Christian life, that without the exercise of charity we cannot fulfil one of the greatest obligations of the law of God, and consequently can form no claim to life everlasting. Charity to become a virtue must be directed by method and regulated by order. Of these I come now to treat, as well as a short view of the advantages arising from the practice of this sublime virtue, to which I shall solicit a continuance of your attention.

II. Order and method should be distinguishing features in the practice of all virtues, especially of charity. For this end the first rule concerning charity is, that every one divide with the poor in proportion to his means. On this subject I cannot lay before you a finer lesson than old Tobias gave his son a little before his death. *Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from you. According to thy ability be merciful. If you have much, give abundantly: if you have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it.* Here the Spirit of God lays down the most excellent rules and discloses the great blessings which flow from the practice of charity. In these days as well as in former times, the practice of charity is most discernable among the poorer class of people. The helpless widow is seen to slip into the hands of the poor a part of her little means which would not be ill bestowed upon herself and her poor little orphans. I say not ill bestowed, because what may be retained without a crime, becomes a high virtue in the grant, by sharing with the representatives of Jesus Christ.
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The poor labourer in the country, cheerfully receives and generously divides with the itinerant beggar, the homely hard-earned morsel, as well as the fire-side of his hut. Look to this you proud and lofty ones of this world, and learn instruction from this scene; you who can well afford charity and still keep your hands for ever shut up, and your bowels steeled to every sentiment of mercy. Order here becomes inverted to behold the poor helping the poor, indigence aiding indigence, and the sorrowful and afflicted wiping away sorrow and affliction. *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.* And to you, O rich, who refuse mercy to the poor, I say with Jesus Christ in the Gospel, *Verily I say unto you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven.* Not that riches are an evil, but the abuse of riches in denying to the poor that charity which the rich are specially bound to bestow. Now supposing a man sincerely disposed to fulfil his duty, how far doth his obligation run with regard to charity? If wealthy? Tobias has answered that question: *If you have much, give abundantly.* If mediocrity and a long family be his lot? Make Jesus Christ one of that family. Lay out on the poor what would be necessary for the support of one additional child. Jesus Christ will repay his own debt. He will moreover bless that family and raise it up. All men are obliged under pain of mortal sin to give unto the poor the superfluous part of their fortunes, after supplying the necessary calls of family, rank and condition. For although men possess their substance, divines observe, it is under such restrictions and limitations as deprive them of the free use of it; because by a divine command we are bound to assist and relieve the poor, and the superfluous part of every man's fortune has always been called by the holy Fathers the patrimony of the poor; and they cannot be deprived of their share, that right they possess without a most flagrant injustice. This right in some cases (such as those of extreme necessity) extends so far, that the
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rich are obliged to retrench and cut away whatever belongs to decency or fashion, in order to bestow on the poor the means of preserving life. It is a great misfortune that no one can be icarcely convinced of having more than is barely sufficient for the support of himself and family. Was this true I acknowledge they may stand acquitted before God. But who are those that excuse themselves in this manner? Those who find money to throw away upon every other occasion. One time it is a man, who from the vanity of shining in dress, lays out every year large sums on the most costly clothes, and soon after throws them away to substitute others at equal expence in their room. Another time a person of the most excessive sensuality, who thinks nothing too nice, too new, too dear, to gratify his palate, and thus at one meal will consume more than would suffice to entertain one hundred poor men. Sometimes it is one who is known to lavish a great part of his income on horses, or hounds, or cards; for extravagance and folly and vice, money is found, but not one shilling can be spared for the craving miseries of a poor distressed family. Let all those retrench these excesses so unworthy not only of a Christian, but of any rational being; and live with that temperance and sobriety St. Paul recommends, as well in dress and figure, as in living and diversions, and then they will be able to supply abundantly not only the wants of their families, but also those of the poor. But it may be asked if property be one's own, may he not dispose of it as he likes? I have answered that question before, and St. Chrysostom answers it now: "It does not follow that because you have property you possess the right of throwing it away; as it appears from the most solid principles of religion, that the Almighty intended the abundance you are possessed of to serve as a public and plentiful resource for the necessities of the poor." To dismiss this consideration, I join in opinion with the soundest divines, and recommend you most earnestly to lay
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by every week, every month, or every year, a certain portion of your substance according to your respective abilities, to be distributed among the poor; introducing thereby Jesus Christ into your domestic œconomy, and making him one of your family. Thus you discharge a most material obligation, whereon perhaps your eternal salvation depends.

Next to order and method, the time we are obliged to give charity comes next under consideration. To this it may be answered in general, that every one who has it in his power to do it, is obliged to relieve his neighbour as often as he stands in great need of his assistance. St. John remarks, *how can the love of God remain with that man, who seeing his neighbour in necessity, shuts up his bowels of mercy and refuses him relief?* For the better discerning those occasions which bring us under a heavy obligation of conscience, divines generally distinguish two sorts of necessities. The one extreme wherein our brethren are perishing for want; in this case every one sees how far his obligations extend. The other great and considerable, when our neighbour is likely to be reduced to unusual streights and hardships; such as poverty, sickness, or confinement: even in these circumstances, divines say, there is no one but is obliged in conscience to give him whatever relief he can afford. Why so? Because that mention being made so often in holy writ of people being damned for want of giving charity, this obligation must occur frequently in the commerce of life: and of consequence cannot be restricted or limited to the occasions we call extreme, which do not happen but very seldom. Now I appeal to yourselves, can any thing be more common than to see these very occasions wherein we are strictly bound to assist our neighbours, overlooked by those who are possessed of ample means to afford such relief? They will tell you with a seeming air of charity, that they would readily stretch their hands to one in real want, but that they meet none of this description.

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Are not those in real want who walk every day naked before your eyes, exposed to all the injuries of the air and all the inclemency of the seasons; whose misery is so great that they look much more like animated shadows than living men? Consult their naked limbs and contracted frame, their dejected looks and emaciated visages; are not these strong and plain indications of the most miserable want? Are not those in want, and in great want, who lie stretched on a bed of suffering in the utmost pain and agony, for whole weeks and months together, without any other relief to ease their limbs but a handful of rotted straw; or to cool the raging heat of a burning fever, but a few drops of tasteless water? Is not the poor, honest tradesman in want, and in very great want, who, through the severity of a relentless creditor, sees his utensils, his little furniture, his all seized upon; himself cast into prison, a wife and his whole family reduced, for want of his labour and assistance, to the lowest ebb of misery? Are not those in exceeding great want, who by unforeseen disasters and casualties, common in life, have been reduced from a certain degree of consequence, decency and comfort, to sudden ruin and deep distress; and yet restrained by a certain shame which always attends virtue in distress, they sink deeper in their miseries, rather than benefit by declaring them, of the resource common to all those who suffer in poverty? There is no day but you may behold instances of this kind, did you but look about and examine with a little care and attention. Not even an hour in the day but you may hear them either cry out for your assistance, or reproach you in dumb silence with cruel insensibility. But far from listening to their moving cries, or keen but just reproaches, you seem to triumph over their sufferings, by displaying all your vanity before their eyes. Sad contrast! Christians abusing by criminal excesses the property lent them by the Lord, and refusing to pay the debt they owe to charity; whilst their fellow-man, their brother in Christ, heir to
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the same hopes, the same promises, the same rewards, lies pining in woe and want, in calamity, sickness and pain. *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in Askalon*; the poor call on the rich for aid, and the poor are put off with a cold 'God help you.'—Yes, the Lord God will help the poor; but he requires that you also help them; or rather that you help yourselves, since relieving the poor is productive of the greatest advantages to mankind.

Happy is the man, saith the Royal Prophet, *who takes notice of the indigent and poor*: and thrice happy may we pronounce him, since he has taken the surest method imaginable to draw down upon himself the choicest blessings of Heaven, as well with regard to this present life, but more especially with regard to the life to come. That charity towards the poor is attended with great advantages even in this life, is confirmed by the authority of the scriptures and the experience of all men. The Spirit of God speaking in the 28th chapter of the book of Proverbs says, *he that giveth unto the poor shall never want*. This promise relates not only to this life, but the next; because the word *never* being interminable in extent, can only apply to eternity, to which this world has no claim whatsoever. Besides, the man of charity shall succeed and prosper in all his undertakings, as we are assured in the chapter following. *He that pities the poor and relieves him, lendeth to the Lord upon usury, and he will repay it*. He will not only pay the principal but the usurious, the multiplied interest, by prospering and blessing all your undertakings. This is a natural and necessary consequence of getting God into your debt. Almighty, all-powerful, all-bountiful as he is, he pays not his engagements by arithmetical calculation. He pays, or in other words he rewards like a God. He presses down, he crams close, he overflows, as the Gospel says in various places; and the charity you bestow on the poor, he considers as an obligation conferred upon himself. *Verily I say unto you, so long as you have done it unto one of the least*

least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. Your own experience on this subject and your observation must be great. Look about you and see who are those who thrive most, I mean by fair and honest practices in the world. Are they not men of charity who have always their hands open to the poor? It is a mystery to others, who are only *wise according to the flesh*, as St. Paul styles it, how every thing prospers in their hands. Whilst their neighbours all around meet the severest disappointments, either from the infidelity of servants, the contrivance of enemies, storms by sea, or dangers by land, they alone seem to be exempt from public as well as private calamity; and stand secure as it were from the evils which are scattered among other men. But what is the cause of all this? A particular protection from Heaven which they have obtained by their plentiful alms; whereas others by their avaricious dispositions and insensibility to the poor, have made themselves obnoxious to a curse much like unto that the prophet pronounced against a part of Judea, whereby fertility was destroyed: *Mountains of Gelboe, let neither dew nor rain fall on ye.* I would not be understood to mean that prosperity in this life and exemption from severe trials, are the reward of charity to the poor. But I do say they commonly attend it; and the exceptions are generally marked by circumstances wherein the Almighty God foresees that prosperity would be prejudicial or probably an insurmountable obstacle to salvation.

All temporal blessings however grand, must fade away in the consideration of the great spiritual blessings which ever attend the practice of charity to the poor. Of these blessings some consist in atoning for past sins, reconciling you with Heaven, and screening you from all danger in the last dreadful passage from time and life into eternity. That charity to the poor has the power of appeasing the wrath of God, and reconciling us with the Most High, is most certain; for the Gospel tells you so.

Give alms, and behold all things are made clean unto you. Not that this virtue has in itself the force of remitting sin, which is peculiar to the sacrament of penance, but because its excellence is so great and the exercise of it so agreeable unto God, that he cannot in some measure forbear looking down in pity on those who practise it. Divines are agreed that this virtue is surely productive of those spiritual advantages in consequence of the assurances the Almighty has given us to this purpose, both in the Old and New Law. For if we consult the Scriptures, we shall find the most urgent motives for the practice of charity, *extend your hand to the poor that mercy may alight on you. As water quenches fire, so do alms resist sin. These are the fruits of charity, to find mercy and life everlasting. Charity covereth a multitude of sins.* Such are the great effects of charity to the poor; and the holy Fathers, St. Ambrose in particular, have gone so far as to say, that alms to the poor are the only effectual means of salvation those have to depend upon, who are deeply immersed in vice. This appears very remarkable in the impious king of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor, whom the Almighty degraded in this life below the rank of beasts: Go, says the Prophet Daniel, *redeem your sins by charity.* Here it is to be remarked, that this prince being guilty of the most abominable crime, usurping the adoration due alone to God, this crime, though great, was capable of being blotted out by alms. Nothing can resist the power of charity: but its peculiar efficacy and virtue are seen in the dreadful passage from time to eternity; that awful period which the just beholds with terror, the sinner with horror. Then shall charity rise up and cover you from the anger of the living God, and conduct your souls to the mansions of repose. Then shall the Lord repay his debts for the charities bestowed for his sake on the poor. How? *In the evil day the Lord will deliver him.* From what? From the fury of the Devil ready to devour him; from the gulph of Hell gaping to swallow

swallow him, and from the justice of God ready to fall on him. *In the evil day*, during the existence of mortality, before life departs, when evils and terrors and dangers flock about and assail the conscious sinner; charity to the poor shall then protect that sinner, and compel God to call him in a moment of mercy, *the Lord will deliver him*. The day I speak of, *in the evil day*, what will become of those who abuse their riches by penury or prodigality, by want or waste? What cruel apprehensions must tear them on approaching the judgment seat of God, whose laws they trampled on, whose monitions they despised, and whose wants they overlooked in the persons of the poor? What expectation, what grounds to hope for mercy, which they themselves refused to the poor? All the delusions of life are then clearly seen, when the door of eternity is just ready to open. If you wish to avoid the dreadful punishments which await sinners in eternity, and for eternity, take care to attend during life to the claims of the poor, to their wants and miseries.— Infuse the balm of charity into their sorrows, bind up their woes with commiseration and relief, and Jesus Christ shall break all troubles before you. *Bend down thy ear to the poor, and pay your debt*, as the wise man directs. It is equally your duty as it is your interest. Proportionable to your fortunes, to your circumstance and situation, *give and it shall be given*. Be generous to your God in the persons of the poor, and God will be generous to you.— Give often. Never pass by distress unnoticed.— Give indifferently to all in want; but if opportunity offers let those who are united to you by the ties of blood have a preference: for this is the order of charity acknowledged by all divines, and grounded on the law of nature; next to them consider the true disciples of Christ, according to the directions of St. Paul, but distress and want in your fellow-creature, no matter where found, should always be relieved. All mankind are your brethren; all mankind, therefore, are objects of your charity.

When charity flows from you, remove natural pity and commiseration, which are human virtues only, and turn your thoughts upon Jesus Christ, and recognize him if possible in the persons of the poor. Think of his command, think of his love, think how much you owe him, and how little you pay him, in relieving his poor representatives. Let neither vanity nor ostentation accompany charity. This would subject you to the reproaches and the censures of the Pharisees by our Saviour. Convey charity in private and in public: in private, because Christ, who sees you in private, will reward you in public; in public, *that your good works may shine before men*, and induce each other to bless and magnify the great Father of all. Where no danger of vanity or ostentation occurs, I prefer the charity afforded in public; because of the edification afforded by the publicity of a good act, and the emulation created by the force of good example.

Without being the particular advocate of any particular charity, I have endeavoured this day to lay before you the obligations you all lie under of practising charity, as well as the advantages which flow from the practice of that virtue. Let never any longer coldness or indifference to the wants of the poor, to their sufferings or miseries, form any blot in your conduct; for charity to the poor draws down even in this life very singular advantages, but after this life it will infallibly introduce us to the embraces of God in the glory of Heaven. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XII.
ON RESTITUTION.

Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.
Mat. xviii. 26.

SUCH was the intreaty made by the unfaithful servant mentioned in the Gospel, who being deeply indebted to his lord, and knowing that forgiveness depended upon payment of the last farthing, he cried out, *have patience with me, and I will pay you all.* In order to attain life everlasting, it is not enough alone to die to our sins, and forsake them entirely; it is, moreover, necessary to live in the full accomplishment of justice. *Who is the man, says the Royal Prophet, who shall dwell in thy house, O Lord?---He that walketh without sin and performeth justice.* Now justice implies the full observance of the law, both in respect to God and our neighbour; not only in paying to the Almighty the honour due unto him as supreme master of the world, but also preserving to our neighbour all his rights entire and inviolate. And yet few there are, even among those who pretend to a considerable share of religion, that pay the necessary attention to so material and indispensable a duty. We daily hear the loudest complaints of the most atrocious injustices. Every city, every street, rings with the cries of the injured and oppressed. Scarcely can you meet one who has not endured the severest injuries: this man is despoiled of his property; another chicaned out of his lawful pretensions; another wounded in the tenderest part—his character and fame. But do we hear of

any reparation being made for so many heavy and enormous grievances? Where is the man whose property is restored, whose character is cleared up and justified, and whose rights are allowed? I appeal to your own experience and knowledge of the world, if this be not a thing almost unheard of. A criminal and fatal omission in the discharge of this duty, so discernible among Christians, demands this day the best exertions of the ministers of the Gospel. The dearest interests of society, as well as your eternal salvation, being connected with the faithful discharge of the precept of restitution, I feel myself called upon to lay before you,

First, how strict and indispensable is the obligation of restitution; and,

Secondly, what persons are particularly obliged thereunto.

The consideration of these two propositions will comprehend vast matter for your instruction and, I hope, improvement. Lend me your steady attention; and unite with me in applying to the Father of Lights, for that docile disposition necessary to hear his word, in order to bring forth fruit unto life everlasting. Almighty Father! Essential Justice! give thy servant impressive words, and my hearers tractable hearts; that hearing, they may hear thy law on restitution, and square their lives by its principles.

I. A duty prescribed by divine command, that has the greatest and most lasting influence on our salvation, must necessarily be reputed a duty of the strictest obligation. Such is the nature of restitution. The law of God orders us to restore whatever we have acquired unjustly, and orders it on the severest terms, in every circumstance of life, under pain of forfeiting all our rights to the kingdom of Heaven. *Thou shalt not steal*, says the Lord; by which we are not only forbidden to take away by force or fraud, but also to keep unjustly our neighbour's substance: for as the end of the divine law, was, to provide for the safety of mankind

kind in general, and to secure every man in his property from any outward injustice, this end would not have been sufficiently compassed, were it lawful for any one to retain peaceably what he had unjustly usurped; this detention being as real a prejudice, and as detrimental to our neighbour, as any violence. If the Law says *thou shalt not covet*, which, being only an act of the mind, is yet highly criminal before God; how much more so to detain in our hands or to deprive our neighbour of his substance? And here, my brethren, I cannot but deplore the error, or rather the affected ignorance, of some people, who, because they were not the first or immediate authors of the injustice, would fain think themselves free from reproach, and not bound to restitution. Knowing themselves possessed of another man's substance, they may even say they are ready to restore it when called for, but think themselves not obliged to make the first steps before hand. Is not this, I ask you, trifling with God? is it not eluding, in a crafty and criminal manner, the most sacred laws of equity and reason? The obligation of restitution is, moreover, grounded on the love we owe our neighbour, in virtue of the divine injunction, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. How can we pretend to love him whilst we retain unjustly in our hands a portion of his substance, the privation of which has perhaps reduced him to the lowest misery? You probably have been witnesses to many scenes of this nature. Traders have been ruined, industry crippled, and whole families overturned, by the private wrongs of a single man. Many have declined insensibly, and gradually sunk into indigence, by being wrongfully kept out of a part of their substance for a considerable length of time. Any detention of a just debt after the legal time of payment comes round, is unfair, and a sin; and this sin increases in proportion to the injury sustained by such unfair detention. Tradesmen's and labourers' demands should be instantly discharged

on application; otherwise a species of robbery is incurred, besides a species of another sin that cries to Heaven for vengeance—oppression of the poor: for, disguise it as you may under the errors of a false conscience, it is oppression not to pay working people what you owe. But the trifle you owed was small, you may say.—The more guilty, I say; because, the smaller the debt the easier the payment: besides, what you call small, may be of great consequence to the owner; what you call a trifle, may cause the downfall of a fair and honest dealer; what you call a trifle, would have prevented many a mournful sigh and melting tear—the moans of sorrow and the tortures of despair; what you call a trifle, I say, would have maintained joy and plenty throughout a numerous family, and preserved their grey hairs from the infamy (if I may so call it) their indigence has brought upon them. Now I ask, how can actions of this nature be consistent with the love our neighbour has a right—an indispensable right—to expect from our hands? Can a man who deprives or withholds from another his substance, or a part of his substance, and becomes thereby instrumental to all the misfortunes he meets with in the world; can such a man be said to love his neighbour, and love him as he ought? Reflect one moment how tender you are of your own interests, and how jealous in preserving them: would you tamely submit---would you allow---would you be glad another made the least attempt against your fortune? Would you not consider him as an enemy was he even inclined to do so? Undoubtedly you would. Turn, then, your thoughts inwardly upon yourselves, and examine how guilty you may be on this head by withholding the property of your neighbour: consider, thus withholding it is inconsistent with the love you owe your neighbour; and consider, that the love of your neighbour is the second great precept of the law, without which it is impossible to please God or obtain life everlasting.

Besides,



Besides, the law allows but three titles to property (and the law of the land is here grounded on the divine law),—purchase, acquisition, or donation. Now he who withholds what he neither purchased, nor acquired by his labour, nor holds by any grant given him, acts in direct opposition to all the laws of justice, and violates every principle of the law of reason, which is also the law of nature, for which the Lord God will not hold him guiltless.

The obligation of restitution being laid before you, grounded on principles of justice, mutual love, and common reason, it appears to me scarcely necessary to establish it on that pillar of light where I always like to establish all doctrinal points—the holy Scripture. Here the Lord speaks, *if any thing be taken away unlawfully, restitution must be made the owner.*—He, therefore, who refuses to restore, when it is in his power to do so, transgresses a divine command, and incurs the pains of that transgression—the loss of God above and eternal sorrows below. The same says the great Apostle, St. Paul, that *rapacious men will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.* By the word *rapacious* we are to understand, as St. Austin explains it, those that appropriate to themselves the substance of other people. The holy father goes farther, and says, “non tollitur peccatum donec restituatur ablatum:” “no injustice can ever be forgiven, until restitution be made.” It must either be made actually, or sincere dispositions formed in the heart to make it soon as possible, otherwise the sin will not be forgiven. Deplorable, then, must the situation be of a Christian, who, feeling the obligation of restitution, refuses complying therewith. Let me tell such unhappy persons, let me warn them, that so long as they persist in such pernicious intentions, they can neither hope for the mercies of God in this life, nor his glory in the next. Although they should pray, and fast, and give alms; although they should fulfil all the other precepts of

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the law, and refuse complying with the obligation of restitution, so long will they remain enemies to God, and their own most cruel enemies also. That portion of their neighbour's substance which they retain unlawfully in their hands, and the long chain of evils which often are necessarily entailed thereby, will for ever be crying out for vengeance unto the Lord, like the blood of Abel so inhumanly shed by a barbarous brother; and the Lord, who is essential justice, cannot but be moved thereby, and in his own good time will pour out his wrath on the guilty usurper's head. You may ask, perhaps, is not sincere repentance sufficient before God? Sincere repentance truly is sufficient; but observe, there can be no such thing as sincere repentance, without making restitution: for repentance necessarily implies, not only a detestation of sin in general, and of our own in particular, but also a fixed and determinate will to observe every material point of the law; and as restitution is one of these points, it follows, that no man can be supposed to have a true sorrow for his injustices, without conceiving, at the same time, a real and effectual desire of repairing them. Many, notwithstanding, are daily seen to deceive themselves in so material a point. They cannot be ignorant that they possess the property or substance of other people: the cloaths they wear, the food they consume, the very houses they inhabit, remind them of their injustice, and yet it is impossible to prevail with them to discharge their duty on this head. Some will tell you, with great gravity and coolness, that they cannot do justice to others, as they are daily wronged by others themselves. This, indeed, is a strange way of reasoning: because others run headlong to Hell, they must follow the example. Will the multitude of transgressors be any excuse for your crimes, or any alleviation to the torments the Almighty has decreed against sin and the sinner, the iniquitous and the unjust? Should you not rather say, because
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doing so would be squaring your life by the Gospel, "I will wrong no man, although I am daily wronged by others," and walk alone in the paths of righteousness, amidst the general depravity of mankind. Others will tell you, they cannot think of making restitution, because it would be attended with ruin to themselves and their families. But let them consider what would become of themselves and their families if their neighbour's substance, or any part thereof, had never fallen into their hands; that of the two, it is much more natural the guilty should suffer, rather than the innocent. What is more, I can assure them, that parting generously and, like a Christian, equitably, with what they have no right to, far from impoverishing their families, will be a sure means of making them prosper in the world, by drawing down a blessing from Heaven upon all their undertakings. Strange reasoning, my brethren, to refuse making restitution lest you should fall into misery and want! But know, that this alone is enough to draw down on your guilty heads the very misfortunes you are so apprehensive of. The Holy Ghost tells you as much, by the prophet Micheas, *the treasures of iniquity* (that is, wealth unlawfully acquired) *are an active fire, that consumes and devours every thing in the house of the wicked and unjust.* By means of those ill-acquired and criminally-kept riches, you may baffle through and cut a figure in the world, for a time, but be sure the day will come, and shortly come, as the Spirit of Truth declares, when all these riches will be swept away on a sudden, without leaving the least remains behind: like the impetuous torrent formed by a sudden cataract on the mountains, which, rushing violently down the sides, bears away every thing in its passage, but in a few moments disappears, leaving dry the channel which before could not contain the deep and rapid torrent.—That similitude is taken from the 46th chap. of Ecclesiastes. In this, as in all other instances, how truly are thy words,
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O my God, verified! Cast your eyes about and behold how many instances of this nature could be produced, were we to consult the annals of time, or even our own short experience in life! how many fortunes have dwindled away in the short space of a very few years! The unjust foundations they were raised on, shook secretly by the hand of God, began to totter when least expected, and soon rushed tumbling to the ground. If, then, you wish to avoid the like fate, give every man his own. Restore whilst restoration, or restitution, becomes a virtue, and the harbinger of blessings: for honesty, with the slenderest funds, shall open a fairer prospect to prosperity, than heaps of riches grounded on injustice.

Others, in fine, will tell you, that at present they cannot part with what they have, but are sincerely disposed so to settle matters at their death as to do justice to mankind. But this is a manifest illusion of self-love, which will most certainly prove the cause of their eternal perdition. The precept of restitution is so obligatory in its nature, that the execution of it cannot (generally speaking) be deferred without committing a great sin: for which reason it is agreed on, by all divines, that one who defers making restitution when it is in his power to make it, can by no means be absolved, or admitted to the sacrament. Deferring restitution aggravates the crime of detention, because it implies the knowledge of an injustice which we refuse to atone for; and we see, by the experience of the world, that restitution thus deferred is rendered impracticable. Your intention by delay is, not to inconvenience yourself by an act of justice, but to make it obligatory upon your heirs: but will they perform that act of justice which you yourself refused to do? Your heirs may, perhaps, inherit your vices, as well as means: if so, think you, will they be more heroically virtuous than you, to let go that grip of your neighbour's means which you wickedly held whilst alive? Your salvation is too momentous
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to let it hang by such cobweb reasoning; your salvation demands of you that act, when living, which, when dead, may be neglected or forgotten. Suppose your heirs to entail the same obligation on their successors: thus the injustice is handed down from father to son, and yet the reparation is never made. Will God hold you guiltless for thus sporting with his holy laws? No: your honest views, your sincere intentions will not excuse you. You should know, by examining your own heart (which every Christian is bound to do), and judging of others by your own vicious propensities, that a strong attachment to riches is a vice so general, that very, very few are willing to give up what they are possessed of. If, then, you refuse to repair an injustice you are conscious of, when you could and ought to do it, it is a criminal omission that will pursue and condemn you at the judgment-seat of God. If on the last day God shall condemn to hell-fire such as refuse to give away a part of their lawful, rightful substance to relieve the poor in their necessities, with what vengeance will he treat those that retain what they have no right or title to? At your leisure, and in silence, meditate on this dreadful truth, and it will render you docile to the voice of justice. Having thus shewn you how strict and indispensable the obligation of restitution is, grounded on a divine command, and enforced by severe penalties, it remains, that we examine who the persons are that are specially bound by this obligation; which will appear in the following part of this discourse.

II. If it be a general principle, that any one who injures another in his property or reputation, is bound to repair the injury, so far as he is able, at the risk of his salvation; it follows, that wide and extensive is the field we are entering on, as no state of life is exempt from numerous and daily wrongs. A master, for instance, makes little of keeping a poor servant for many months, perhaps years, out of his hard-earned wages, and if ever
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he pays thinks he has fulfilled all justice. But still he is bound in conscience to repair the loss the poor servant suffered by want of his wages. The money in his industrious hands would have turned to a beneficial account, would have fructified, and the injury here lies at his master's door, which he is bound to repair. The servant, in turn, makes no scruple of neglecting his master's business, embezzling his substance, or suffering it to be embezzled by others, consuming wastefully his provisions, destroying his furniture, and letting all go to ruin: but let him know, that in the eyes of God he is accountable for whatever perishes through his fault, as he is paid for watching over and taking care of his master's substance.—The guilt is incurred, as well by the plunder and neglect of the servant, as by the servant's conniving at the plunder made by others, or the want of the necessary vigilance, for all which restitution must be made. Workmen and labourers come also under consideration: You agree with a man, or a set of men, to perform a certain task; whilst the master is present, the work goes on as it ought, but as soon as he turns aside, the work is neglected; and yet the workmen shall insist upon full payment: but let them understand, that all they receive over and above the just value of the work they performed, is so much stolen, for which restitution must be made. A stranger, innocent, inexperienced, and unacquainted with the value of merchandize, comes into your place for some of the goods you sell: immediately perceiving his ignorance, you take advantage of it, by exacting more than the value or the accustomed price, or foisting on him bad or damaged goods. This you call a lucky hit: but I tell you, it is an injustice for which restitution must be made; otherwise the justice of God shall seize you, and you shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Many, very many there are, who use false weights; mix their liquors; or adulterate their goods, which they sell out afterwards at the same price of pure and unmixed goods: but be
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it known unto them, that as all this is a cheat upon the public, unless restitution be made, they shall account for it at the judgment-seat of God. —Others make no difficulty of engrossing and monopolizing, by their own private authority, and without any legal commission, all the provisions of a market, in order afterwards to sell them out, at the most exorbitant rates; but be it known unto them, that as this is a burthen they unjustly throw upon the public, they must make restitution, otherwise they shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven. You owe a just debt, and to induce your honest creditor to accept of a composition, you trump up a catalogue of real or imaginary losses; —or you are indebted to one, whose knowledge or circumstances do not allow him to take a speedy course for the recovery of his right, for which reason you put him off from day to day; from week to week, and employ all the little turns, and intricacies of the law to defeat his designs, until at length taking advantage of his inability, you compel him to accept of an unjust composition; but be it known to you, you are bound to restore all the damages and expences he sustained, otherwise you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. A taylor seldom fails to take up in a merchant's shop more cloth and appendages than are necessary, for the base purpose of selling the overplus to dishonest workmen or wicked buyers; who afterwards sell out or make up on their own account, the produce of this dishonest traffick: but know, O ye wiseones in the ways of fraud and vice, that restitution must be made of all you have acquired in this iniquitous way; otherwise you shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Still more melancholy is the remark that the shop-keeper blushes not to favor these fraudulent practices, by never detecting the villainy, which he is always in charity bound to do; and even becomes partaker of the injustice, by exchanging for the dishonest workman the goods he knows to have been wrongfully taken up; in which case, he is as much bound to restitution, as
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if he gave his goods for money he saw picked out of his neighbour's pocket. Again, many there are, who often raise fortunes by the most unlawful and exorbitant interest;---a distressed gentleman for instance applies for cash for a bill where he knows cash may be found; but the man of money acknowledges the bill is a good one, but has not the cash at present: If however the gentleman buys an elegant horse in his stable for forty guineas, (intrinsically worth ten) or a prime hoghead of wine, for fifty guineas (intrinsically worth twenty) he will strive to procure him the balance in money. Necessity compelling, the bargain is closed. But the vengeance of God shall pursue that man and his money, unless restitution be made. Like evil birds brooding among the willows, others are seen watching the occasion of grasping the property of the widow and the orphan: some buy at a great undervalue from those whose title is doubtful, and rejoice when the occasion offers of drawing a considerable interest into their hands, even by crushing or trampling on distress. But let all who act thus comprehend, that without restitution there is no such thing as ever entering the kingdom of Heaven. Let those who are charged with the administration of justice, or employed on references, always hold the balance equal in their hands, without inclining to either side from motives of private interest or affection; but if necessary to throw a burthen upon both parties, as it often is, let the distribution be made with justice and impartiality, according to circumstance and situation; if it be not done so, it is a breach of justice, which must be repaired in this life, or eternally punished in the next.

Hitherto I have touched upon some of the direct methods of hurting our neighbour: some of the indirect ways of hurting him, now demand your most serious attention; because they subject us no less to the laws of restitution, than to the anger of Heaven. Revenge, that corroding malady of the mind, bursts forth like black-vapours from a volcano, and

and vomits calumnies as unchristian as unfounded, whereby character is destroyed, and all the blessings of social life blasted. In the trading line, many have lost both credit and fortune by one false report. How many young persons have lost decent establishments by one false hint? Every day we see the most unblemished characters winked down in a female club, or shrugged away by a set of grave, morose, censorious men. Yet the law of God requires those, guilty of crimes of this nature, in the first place, to restore their neighbours character by a public retraction; and in the second, to repair all the losses, and atone for all the damages they may have suffered by reason of their false aspersions or calumnious insinuations. The laws of charity being violated by trespassing on your neighbour's good name or property, restitution and reparation must be made: palliatives will not excuse you; for I know it is generally said, that no harm is meant by those loose and unguarded expressions. You who cast a firebrand among your neighbour's goods, whereby conflagration and ruin follow: or who blind-folded wield a weapon that deals death and destruction all around, can you set up an excuse of meaning no harm, or if you should, how far will it palliate your crimes for the evil incurred? Besides it is well known, that from the corruption of human nature, people are apt to put the worst construction upon every thing, and transform the minuteft failings into crimes of the blackest dye; so that, whatever bad consequences arise to your neighbour from your criminal conduct, must be repaired, otherwise the great God will charge them on the authors, and they will for ever stand between them and the kingdom of Heaven. Another species of knavery, under the false name of dexterity and skill, is sometimes practiced by trading people. Envious of your neighbour enlarging his trade and thriving in appearance more than yourself; and resolved to pull him down, or at least to retard his career; you attack him

him not by open force, but secret treachery—you undermine his credit; you write to his correspondents abroad, to be cautious in sending goods to a man, of whom you have a doubtful opinion. Doubts and apprehensions of course seizing the correspondents, the orders are stopt, the goods withheld, disappointments, decline and ruin follow:—Again, an old trader observes a young man commence a business that has been perhaps exclusively in his hands for many years before: but a competitor or a sharer of its sweets must not be allowed; and rather than suffer it, he resolves to sacrifice a part of his property, by selling his goods under prime cost, for the purpose of depriving the young man of all trade and thereby effecting his ruin. These cases call down the just anger of God, and unless reparation be made, will for ever exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. Sometimes little pains are taken to conceal those wicked designs, which break forth in open declarations that such a one is an unfair trader, his goods damaged, adulterated or inferior to your own; but know, thou wise and cunning worldling, compensation, atonement, restitution must be made for all damages caused by such conduct, otherwise you never will enter the kingdom of Heaven.

So common is injustice grown in our days, that sooner should my powers of strength and utterance fail, than the occasions which subject us to the obligation of restitution. Lest however I should trespass too much on that steady attention which you have kindly given me, I shall hasten to a conclusion; most earnestly beseeching you, as you value that glory so dearly purchased for you by Jesus Christ on the cross—as you fear the dreadful torments prepared for sinners, that you fulfil the great duty of restitution;—that you repair the damages heretofore caused by your imprudence, and restrain all your senses for the time to come by the laws of Christ and his church. For a mess of porridge, do not, like Esau, give up your noble birth-

birth-right. What you retain in your hands is but a trifle, which never can prosper, and yet this trifle (dreadful is the reflection!) shall deprive you for ever of the kingdom of Heaven. Can you reflect thus and not tremble? Suppose by trampling on the laws of justice you became possessor of this whole world, its honors, riches and pleasures: suppose you held the possession of these a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand years. The term still is short: death will come with all its terrors; the soul must go and the body will follow to the region of horrors, there to drink the cup of the wrath of God, whilst God is God. Thus this world shall pass and all its toys, time and all its passing cheats; but the soul lives, lost to itself, its God, eternity and all! How long? Alas! for ever and ever. Were those now suffering by the terrible justice of Heaven, for neglecting to repair the injustices they committed, were they allowed to return to life, O! how exemplary would be their restitution. But so dead is their hope, so black their despair, that were they possessed of ten thousand worlds, all would they give, for one drop of water to cool their tongues. Take warning then by their deplorable fate. I charge you on the part of Almighty God, to restore without delay whatever you unjustly possess belonging to others. Make restitution for the damages you have caused. Let nothing stand in competition with your salvation. Take care and avoid all injustice for the future. Behave in your respective stations, as St. Paul desires you, *feebly and honestly*. Masters attend to your servants; pay them full and fair, and defraud them not of their earnings. Act thus from a principle of justice; but if you do not, remember there is a master above, who shall weigh you in the scales of the sanctuary---a diamond scale, where *justice without mercy* shall be the lot of all the unjust. Servants attend to your masters. Fulfil the duties for which you are hired. Waste not the time of your employment, or work, in idleness. His property waste
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not, nor let others waste. *Watch* as Christ desires you, for to this end you are employed; and the great master in Heaven, who placed you under a temporal master on earth, shall reward or punish you as you deserve; and *every man according to his works*. In your mutual intercourse with each other, cherish the principle of honesty, which is indispensable to your salvation, and a virtue dear to God, and most beneficial to man. Should you in the streets, in the common high-way, meet the property of your neighbour, knowing it not yours, you are bound to seek for, and restore it to the owner. But the principle of this virtue must be carried farther than outward actions; a bridle must be put on your words; no more malicious reflections, uncharitable insinuations, fraudulent practices, or unlawful contrivances; our very intentions must be guarded and corrupt nature restrained in the bud: thus the reign of justice shall commence, by restoring to every man his own. For this end, O Lord! we beseech thy grace in this life and thy glory in the next. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XIII.

ON PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

John in prison.

Mat. c. 11, v. 2.

HEROD on the throne, and John in prison; iniquity in triumph, and virtue in distress; the abettors of wickedness surrounded with every advantage of life, whilst the friends and favourites of Heaven labour under the heaviest calamities.—Here is an object, my brethren, capable of perplexing and even staggering the most firm and discerning minds. The decrees, however, of Providence are to be revered, even in his most dark and impenetrable proceedings. What the Almighty ordains must be both just and good. Although this single consideration were enough to justify the ways of Heaven, yet our blessed Redeemer has been pleased to give us more ample and pleasing lights upon this head in the Gospel: *Happy they that shall suffer on account of righteousness, for their's is the kingdom of Heaven. The world shall rejoice, but ye shall weep and mourn; but your sorrow shall be turned into everlasting joy.* If worldly joys and comforts be generally the portion of the wicked upon earth, it appears clearly from those words of Jesus Christ our Lord, that sufferings here below shall be the special inheritance of the just. This is visibly the appointment of the eternal and unerring wisdom of God.—Yet many there are so little acquainted with the great and fundamental principles of religion, as to feel pain, often indignation, on beholding the afflictions of the just, the peace and tranquillity of sinners. Amidst those
mysterious

myfterious difpenfations of Providence, their dull minds can hardly diftinguifh the flendereft veftiges of the bounty or juftice of God; inafmuch as they frequently fay within their breasts, “ if the Almighty be juft, why doth he fuffer the wicked to thrive? if all-bountiful and good, why doth he not affift and protect the virtuous?” With all weak and fuperficial minds, this, my brethren, is the feeming fcandal of religion, and a great obftacle to virtue. To remove this fcandal, and juftify thy ways, O God! in difpenfing prosperity and adverfity here below, be mine the important, inftitutive task; and thine the glory, O Spirit of Truth! in furnifhing me with correct ideas and impreffive words, that we may all venerate and adore the wifdom of thy judgments and the equity of thy ways. For this purpofe, my brethren, I follicit your attention to the confideration of two propofitions, important yet fimple:

First, that the prosperity of the wicked is one of the greateft punishments the Almighty can inflict; and the

Second, that the afflictions of the juft are among the greateft blessings he can beftow.

I. The Spirit of God warns you, in the words of King David: *do not envy the happinefs of thofe that prosper in their ways, becaufe they will foon perifh, like a blade of grafs that withers in the duft.* The very felicity they enjoy is the fource and immediate caufe of their eternal perdition; as it, 1ft, neceffarily gives rife to the greateft immoralities; and 2d, neceffarily obftructs the moft effential virtues, — fuch virtues as are abfolutely requifite towards attaining the kingdom of Heaven.

It is very plain, my brethren, that the profperity of finners is the caufe of their licentiousnefs, their intolerable pride, infatiable ambition, flagrant injuftices, their impiety and diffolution. Is it not profperity that feeds and enflames their paffions? that fupplies them with frequent, or rather continual opportunities of gratifying the moft irregular

gular appetites, in open violation of the laws of God? Is it not prosperity that enables them to transgress every obligation with impunity, and procures them even honour and applause amidst the most base and shameful excesses? Man whom prosperity has placed in the superior ranks of life, is apt to think himself in reality above the level of his fellow-creatures: the glare of wealth and grandeur dazzles his eyes and obscures his understanding, so that he never views himself but in a false light—a light always advantageous to himself and disadvantageous to others; and under these circumstances, it is no way surprising he should cry out, like the publican in the Gospel, *I give thee thanks, O God, that I am not like unto the rest of mankind.* Hence proceed that contempt and disdain which are so very discernible in all persons in elevation: scarcely will they look down on their fellow-creatures, as if they were formed themselves of nicer clay, or as if all they pride and glory in were any more, as the Royal Prophet observes, *than ashes and dirt.* But are sentiments of this kind, my brethren, consistent with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who hath solemnly declared, that *unless you become like unto little children*, as free from vanity and pride as they are, and entertain as slender an opinion of yourselves as they constantly do, *you shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven?*

The next attendant upon prosperity is ambition—ambition of wealth, of honours. In the prosecution of these sentiments, and the gratification of these passions, how many heinous sins and transgressions necessarily occur! The ambitious man stops at nothing, to place himself in the high station his vanity aspires to. Deceit, calumny, circumvention, depressing the good, supplanting the most deserving, uniting with the most iniquitous and unjust; in a word, the most criminal steps and proceedings are all overlooked the moment they become favourable to his ambitious views. In this situation he necessarily forgets that

that great injunction which Jesus Christ lays upon all the faithful in general: *Seek first the kingdom of Heaven*, seek it before all things, and if you do, the word of Christ is pledged that *all the rest shall be given unto you*.

Covetousness, or an insatiable desire of wealth, is the next evil that appears in the train of prosperity. To gratify this passion, what frauds and injustices are daily committed! How many ways and practices are followed, highly criminal in their nature, which avarice glosses over with the specious name of fair and equitable dealing! The most execrable usury is often practised in the eyes of a Christian country, under the criminal disguise of new and ingenious industry. Possessed of these principles, how is it possible for those to fulfil the commands of Jesus Christ, who orders us not to love this world, nor the things of this world; to despise all the perishable wealth of this world, and lay up treasures in the kingdom of Heaven, where time consumes not, nor violence takes away—where the moth doth not destroy nor accidents impair?

Were the evils attendant on prosperity (I mean which prosperity usually gives rise to) confined to the catalogue we have just touched upon, it were sufficient to excite the alarm and the terror of every virtuous mind: but the evil stops not here—it extends even to the most unbounded voluptuousness and dissoluteness: For by wealth nothing is wanting to gratify the passions; and from being constantly gratified, the passions become strong and violent; like a flame which burns the fiercer the more it is fed with fuel. Hence that licentiousness so very remarkable in people of fortune and opulence, whose study is pleasure, whose pursuits are delights and joys; and to procure this pleasure, those delights and joys, expence is neither spared, nor opportunities neglected, nor improvement omitted. That day, that hour, not diversified by some new amusement, would be tedious, dull, and heavy; and

and where innocent amusement is overlooked, criminal enjoyment is grasped at. But I would ask, my brethren, how is all this consistent with that temperance and sobriety St. Paul requires at our hands; that abnegation and self-denial Jesus Christ enjoins universally—*if any one will be my disciple let him deny himself*—let him refuse himself the gratification of his passions and all his irregular appetites?

Seeing, therefore, that the prosperity of this world is the fruitful source of the greatest immoralities, is it a situation to be envied? is it not rather a situation to be dreaded and shunned by every man who means to conduct himself by the principles of religion, and thereby attain eternal happiness? If in this situation a man were at any time mindful of his God, or the duty he owes his God, some room then would remain to hope for his salvation: but prosperity leads to an entire forgetfulness of God, and the things of God, according to St. Paul—*the terrestrial man has no relish for the things of God*. The terrestrial man is he who places his happiness in this world, and finds no comfort but in gratifying his passions and sensual appetites with the criminal and unlawful pleasures of the world. *I became rich, says the Prophet Osee, and found an idol to adore*: the idol of ambition, the idol of vanity and pleasure. To this idol is sacrificed every thought and desire of eternal happiness; to this idol are sacrificed the present consolation of a virtuous mind, and the pleasing hopes of future felicity; to this idol, in a word, is sacrificed every sentiment and affection of the soul. But among those profane sacrifices at the shrine of wealth, among the evils that prosperity entails, none is more lamentable than the apathy it creates in the soul for the things of God, that indifference for seeing him in his heavenly kingdom, or the possession of any heaven but this world and its base and sordid joys. When seldom this idolater in prosperity thinks of God, it is not to pay him the just and humble homage of the mind; not to ac-

knowledge his supreme power and goodness by filial love and a wilful submission to his divine laws: no; sentiments of concern only arise, that this life is terminable, and the world also perishable, and that both are not to last for ever.—If ever this idolater in prosperity, I say, thinks of God, it is not with the consoling hopes and firm confidence which virtue inspires, of sharing for ever in the glory and happiness of Heaven: no; it is with all the terrors of a guilty mind, and the liveliest apprehensions of falling a victim to his wrath in the eternal, horrid, devouring flames of Hell.

This dreadful situation is the necessary result of the prosperity of this world. Now, I would ask, what degree of happiness is attainable in a situation of this kind? or how far is Divine Providence to be arraigned for not placing those that are destined to the kingdom of Heaven in such dangerous situations as must necessarily pervert their minds and corrupt their hearts, and thereby disqualify them for the eternal happiness they were intended for? Is it not rather the greatest blessing that Heaven can bestow? We should undoubtedly think so were we governed by the principles of religion; but judging as we do, from the false maxims of the flesh, we generally think the reverse. Even a Christian is frequently seen to repine, that Providence does not crown all his undertakings with success, and bestow upon him at least a competent share of the wealth and happiness of this world. Even a Christian is known to take offence, that Providence should suffer the most profligate sinners to enjoy the largest shares of the wealth and happiness of this world. Like Job, he says, *Why are the impious suffered to live? why are they raised above the croud? why are they confirmed in the possession of their wealth?* These murmurs of misery, which stole from the lips of a just man, are not becoming a Christian. The questions he should ask are, What is this prosperity in the eyes of God, which creates so much uneasiness in the
mind

mind of man?—a blessing or a punishment? Does it lead to eternal happiness, or debar us from it? Is it consistent with the execution of the divine law, or scarcely consistent therewith? The proper question to ask, is, what is the end of this prosperity? Holy Job answers, *to spend their days in the greatest affluence and delight, and afterwards, in the twinkling of an eye, to be tumbled into Hell. I have seen the sinner raised on high, says the Royal Prophet, and placed above the loftiest cedars of Libanus; but in a moment he disappeared: I have sought for him, but could not find the least tracks of the place he occupied.* Who could enjoy more pleasure in the world than the rich man mentioned in the Gospel? He was blessed with a large fortune; spent his days in feasting and delights; was clothed with the richest attire, and lived, in every shape, as became a man of the highest rank and distinction: What was the end of all his prosperity?—*he died, and was buried in Hell!* But observe the end of poverty and want, sorrows and sufferings: Lazarus, whose sores the dogs had licked, whose extreme want beseeched a crumb; he also died, and was transported by angels into the bosom of Abraham, into the mansions of light, to repose for ever in all the joys and glory of Heaven.

As it appears from what has been said, that the prosperity of this world naturally and directly leads to eternal perdition, we should not only consider it in this light, at least for the time to come, but also rejoice in spirit that the Almighty hath been pleased not to place us in such situations as, from their nature and the many strong temptations attendant upon them, bear an opposition almost insurmountable to eternal salvation. You may, perhaps, inquire, is prosperity inconsistent with eternal happiness? I answer no: for some have sanctified themselves in the greatest elevation of power and opulence of fortune. But these were men who punctually complied with the directions of St. Paul, *possessing this world as if they possessed it not, and*

using the things of this world as if they used them not: who, surrounded with every allurements to pleasure, denied themselves constantly, not only every unlawful gratification, but frequently the most innocent amusements, in order to lower their passions, or copy that self-denial which Jesus Christ hath exemplified in his sacred person: men who seemed to have appetites, only to controul; passions, to subdue; riches, to despise, or distribute amongst the poor: who, far from enjoying any one of the corrupt advantages of fortune, made themselves a perpetual sacrifice to the Lord, by perpetual austerities, mortification, and penance. In those days of immorality and libertinism, of vice and folly, how rare is the Christian of this character surrounded with prosperity and fortune! The weakness and depravity of human nature, the unresisted influence of seducing example, the many strong solicitations to sin which always attend the wealthy and prosperous conditions of life, are reasons why scarce one appears to stem this tide of corruption, where thousands are hurried along in its woe-ending torrent. Convinced of this truth, the Pagan philosophers of old have acknowledged it easier to bear up against the heaviest strokes of adversity, than curb and moderate the licentious sallies of intemperate desire amidst the affluence of fortune. Wherefore, although it be admitted that prosperity is not utterly inconsistent with salvation, it must be allowed, on the other hand, that it is scarcely consistent therewith; and, by a necessary consequence, that nothing should appear more dreadful in the eyes of a Christian. Notwithstanding the evils entailed by prosperity, many are heard to say, with the worldling in Holy Writ, *happy the people to whom the things of this world belong. But ten thousand times more happy the people, says the Royal Prophet, who make the Lord their God.* For the enemies of the Lord, after being raised to the highest honours, and exalted above the croud, shall suddenly fall and disappear, like smoke that
flies

flies before the wind and vanishes into air. If this be the dreadful fate of all those that prosper in this life, had I not a just right to say from the beginning, that the prosperity of sinners is one of the greatest punishments the Almighty can inflict, as, on the other hand, the sufferings of the just are among the greatest blessings he can bestow,—a truth I shall endeavour to make clear in the second part of this discourse.

II. That sufferings and affliction are among the greatest blessings Almighty God can confer upon the chosen children of Adam here below, I intend to prove on these grounds: that thereby daily and constant opportunities occur, 1st, of proving their fidelity and constancy; 2d, of securing their salvation, by screening them from the most imminent dangers of the world; and, 3d, of increasing, by additional degrees of virtue and godliness, the immortal crowns of glory he reserves for them in the life to come. All these blessings flow as a necessary consequence of that obscurity and affliction wherein the just, under the direction of Divine Providence, are seen to live for the most part upon earth.

It requires little argument to shew that tribulation is that point wherein the fidelity and constancy of a just man appear in their brightest colours—such colours as leave no room for doubt or suspicion. It is requisite for the honour and glory of God to manifest unto the world, that he is and will be served to the end of time by a chosen few, in spirit and truth, notwithstanding the opposing power of temptation, weakness, and seduction. As a scene of this kind must necessarily reflect the greatest honour upon the Divinity, he takes pleasure in displaying it from time to time before the eyes of mankind; and this scene, which honours God, delights his angels, and edifies the world—this scene, I say, is the just man in the deepest affliction. It is easy to serve God in the calm and serene seasons of life, when neither difficulties, nor

losses, nor crosses interrupt the agreeable progression of our desires; but to continue faithful under the heavy pressure of bitter calamity, this is the effect of a most lively faith, an animated hope, an unshaken constancy. These virtues, to appear in their brightest lustre, appear in the just man under severe trial: for if under the hardest circumstances a man shall not depart in the least from the laws of God, there can be no doubt of his faith, his firm hope, or of his obedience and fidelity to God. My meaning is, that a man who remains firm and unshaken amidst the most violent storms of temptation, loves God above all things and prefers him before all things; which is the greatest honour the Supreme Being can receive at our hands. To declare publicly at any time for the service of God and the obedience due from his rational creatures, is indeed glorious to the Divinity; but how far are these declarations to be depended on? Vain in general, and empty, like air, they pass away forgotten and unnoticed. Hence are frequently seen such declarations violated the very instant they were made. It is not, therefore, such vain and empty declarations of fidelity—declarations that consist barely in words, that honour and glorify the Divinity: no; but declarations grounded on action, declarations verified by the nicest trials of suffering and tribulation. On these grounds alone Almighty God seems to exult and triumph at the fidelity of a good man labouring, but never sinking, under the heaviest calamities of life. On this occasion observe the proud words of the Lord to the Spirit before his throne, *hast thou seen my servant Job?* not as formerly, surrounded with honours and all the affluence of fortune, lifting up his righteous hands in thanksgiving to Heaven (for bare thanksgiving requires no generous effort of the soul), but stretched upon a heap of mire, a prey to the most acute disorders, abandoned by his friends, destitute of every consolation but that of a virtuous mind, yet religiously submissive under this deluge
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of misfortunes, and blessing the divine hand that struck him. *Hast thou seen my servant Job?* There is a sight worthy the attention of the whole world, pleasing to Heaven, glorious and honourable to the Divinity, since it exhibits the most unquestionable proofs of true and unfeigned virtue.

In this light we should consider every just man amidst his sufferings upon earth: we should look upon him as the chief instrument of the glory of God; and if any of you, my brethren, have the happiness of being, by tribulation of any kind, suffering members of Jesus Christ, rejoice in spirit; for while you suffer without departing from your fidelity to God, you certainly glorify him more thereby than you could in any other shape whatsoever, and, in return, Almighty God will hereafter glorify you in Heaven. Suffering with a spirit of religion, is the martyrdom of the mind—a martyrdom the more glorious as it lasts the longer. Confessing our faith and sealing it with our blood, is the greatest glory the Divinity can receive at our hands, according to the words of Jesus Christ, *no man can have greater love than he that lays down his life.*—Next to this, comes that perpetual testimony of our faith which results from a long series of sufferings borne with fidelity, patience, and love. Let us no longer admire that Divine Providence is constantly pleased to afflict the just, or suffer them to be constantly afflicted by others: in this he seeks and finds the manifestation of his glory; and who is the man that would not deem it a happiness to be instrumental in the manifestation of the glory of God? If Almighty God does not call others to the same trials, it is because they are not worthy of him: The base metal is rejected by the skilful workman, whilst the gold is thrown into the furnace, to be refined and purified until it becomes proper for the curious and elaborate performances of art.

It is not his glory alone that Almighty God has in view in the afflictions of the just, but likewise

their own particular interest and advantage, by securing their salvation. This security arises from the absence of temptation: for tribulation, like sentinels, forms the life-guard of the soul, by preserving it in justice and righteousness to the last moment of life. As nothing is more capable of making us forgetful of our duty towards God than the happiness of this world, so nothing can more effectually keep us united to God than the afflictions of this world; because, in a situation of this kind we live at a distance from all the temptations attending the high and wealthy conditions of life. "While the just are afflicted, sinners are suffered to prosper," Tertullian says, "that they may serve, like so many fatted victims, to glut the devouring wrath of Heaven, and satisfy the unappeasable justice of the Lord, during the unbounded length of eternity." Hard, or even narrow circumstances, preserve us from the criminal abuse of wealth; humiliation, from the extravagance of towering pride; inability, from the unjust and daring projects of ambition; sickness and infirmity, from the excesses of licentiousness and dissoluteness. Draw a just man from the state of obscurity and affliction wherein he glorifies God by his patience, his sufferings, his humility, and resignation, and place him amidst comforts and delights; he will soon forget his Almighty Father, so far as to act in open violation of his holy laws: the incense he constantly directed to the throne of God in his obscurity, will now be directed elsewhere, and offered to some mortal creature he adores. The unhappy Jews afford a melancholy instance of this observation, who, after their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt, gave the strongest proofs of their infidelity and obstinacy. *In the very desert, after being fatted with the blessings of God, they murmured aloud, and openly rebelled against Heaven and the Lord.* This is, my brethren, the great mystery of Divine Providence with regard to the afflictions of the just: as the Almighty foresees they

they would certainly abandon the ways of justice in any other situation, he mercifully keeps them in that state wherein they, by a happy necessity, must remain faithful unto God. At present, I confess, we can hardly conceive these sublime truths, from the darkness of our understandings or the perverseness of our nature; but in the great day of revelation, when the mysterious ways of Providence shall be unfolded, we shall see the many enormities and excesses we would run into, if the Almighty, mercifully severe, had not prevented it, by continual affliction. Then we shall see, that our perdition had been unavoidable in any other system of Providence than that of affliction; and upon seeing it, we shall bless the Lord, who, by wholesome severity, removed us at the greatest distance from sin, and thereby, as it were, led us by the hand in the ways of eternal happiness. But the views of God are not confined to the manifestation of his glory in the sufferings of the righteous upon earth, nor barely to secure their salvation, he goes further, and allows the just to draw from their sufferings an additional increase to that glory which awaits them in the kingdom of Heaven.

The kingdom of Heaven is a reward—the reward of those, St. Paul says, that *combat and conquer*. The more victories we obtain over the enemies of our salvation, the greater rewards we become entitled to. But no man can be crowned that has not conquered, nor conquer that has not fought; therefore it is necessary, in the ways of Providence, that the just, for whom the rewards of Heaven are destined, should be put to frequent and critical trials. Sinners are suffered to live in profound peace; why so? because the rewards are not destined for them, nor, consequently, the trials that are necessary for obtaining those rewards. But the just are afflicted, constantly afflicted; because, as the Spirit of Truth says, by the mouth of St. Paul, *every stone which is to enter into and make up a part of the structure of the heavenly Sion, must be hewn*

without the city; that is, prepared and fitted, by affliction upon earth, to occupy a place in the kingdom of Heaven. Hence we may justly infer, what the wisdom of the flesh may look upon as a misfortune to the just, is in reality the greatest blessing Heaven can bestow; every hardship they endure is an addition to the glory that is reserved for them in the kingdom of God; the more unhappy they are in this life, the greater felicity they are to enjoy in the life to come. Nor is the moment of enjoyment deferred to any distance of time: *A few moments*—all you, my brethren, who are distressed, afflicted, or oppressed, listen to the words of your Saviour, and let them bring comfort to your souls—*a few moments, and you shall see me: then I will come and your hearts shall rejoice; and your joy shall be full.* At this happy period, the just, who had been often insulted upon earth by the sinner, shall ask him, “where are now the Gods
“in whom you placed your confidence? where your
“wealth and prosperity? your fleeting, empty joys
“and short-lived vanities? Your dreams of happiness are over. Your sun of life is set: impenetrable darkness surrounds you, and eternal
“perdition is your lot;” whilst inexpressible, interminable felicity succeeds all the afflictions of the just upon earth.

Is not this enough, my brethren, to justify the mysterious ways of Providence with regard to the good and the wicked upon earth? Doth it not appear, that, permitting sinners to thrive and prosper in the world; never disturbing them amidst their guilty joys; abandoning them to their passions and the corruption of their own desires; leaving them in a state of elevation that swells the heart—of splendor that bewilders, and magnificence that dazzles, the mind—of fortune and affluence that excite and gratify the most criminal appetites; are all strokes of severity and the most rigorous justice that God can exert during this life, as it leads to final repentance, which ends in everlasting ruin? On the
contrary,

contrary, doth it not appear likewise, that trying the fidelity of the just, by affliction; keeping them in a state of justice, by removing the strongest incitements to sin; and giving them frequent opportunities of heaping merits upon merits, and thereby enlarging in a high degree the sphere of their future happiness—are all proofs of the most generous love and unerring wisdom? You are, therefore, bound humbly to adore the ways of Providence upon earth. Astonishing as they may be, they are the dictates of unerring truth, incomprehensible wisdom, unbounded goodness. If Heaven afflicts here, it is either to draw us to repentance, or maintain us in justice to the end. Let us therefore say, with King David, *In thee, O Lord, I have hoped, let me never be confounded.* Treat me as thou art pleased in this life, I shall always be resigned to thy holy will. To thee is best known, my Father, my Redeemer, my God, and my All, what is most conducive to my salvation. Riches or poverty, elevation or obscurity, health or infirmity, distinction or disgrace; whatever you decree, that I accept with reverence and submission. I only beg thy grace to comply with thy holy will: that after glorifying thee upon earth, amidst the various tribulations of life, I may at length glorify thee for ever in thy heavenly kingdom. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XIV.

O N D E A T H.

If any one will keep my word, he shall not die for ever.
 St. John, c. 8, v. 51.

WHAT is meant by death in the words of the Apostle, is eternal death, or perdition. As for natural death, or the dissolution of our bodies, no man is exempted from it; because, being all sinners, we all must die: for *death*, as St. Paul declares, *is the wages of sin*; and *it is by sin death entered into the world*. Death therefore was a part of the punishment inflicted upon our first parent, for his disobedience to the laws of God in Paradise, and we, by inheritance, become liable to the guilt of that disobedience, and to its punishment—death. Man originally formed by God was a perfect being, intelligent, immortal, and full of wisdom.—But these sublime privileges have been in a great measure lost, by his transgression. That intelligence which assimilated him to the angels is unknown; his immortality cut short by death; and the wisdom or understanding that dignified and raised him beyond all the works of the creation, is now most miserably darkened and obscured. Of all the evils entailed on mankind by the unhappy fall of Adam, none is so deplorable as death. Death, the punishment of sin, consists of two parts—temporal death, or the separation of the soul and body; eternal death, or the death of the damned: the one is common to all, the other to sinners alone. But it is in our power, as St. Austin ingeniously remarks, to convert this poison into a remedy,

remedy, and make that which is the privation of mortal life the very source of everlasting life.—How so? Because the consideration of death, as this holy Father observes, is, by a most wonderful providence of God, one of the most powerful preservatives against sin, which is the very cause, not only of natural, but also eternal death and perdition. The word death, I know, has a very disagreeable sound to many of the Christians of our days, but much more disagreeable is a serious consideration of so dreadful a subject. No subject, however, involves greater truths or more awful consequences; none more capable of humbling the pride of man—the fertile source of most of his disorders; and, of course, none more likely to awaken your attention, from the interest you all must necessarily feel in the consideration of a terrible scene, which will come to the lot of each of you individually one day to undergo. The proper consideration of death, now, by rooting up the disorders of the soul, may prevent the evils that generally attend it: for let me ask you, What are the usual and most powerful sources of the perdition of mankind? Are they not the love of this world, and a total neglect of the things of God? Now the consideration of death destroys, in some measure, the entire influence of these two fruitful principles of evil; because,

First, it naturally disengages our souls from the love of this world: and,

Secondly, it naturally bends our thoughts upon heavenly things.

Thus by dying spiritually to the world, and uniting ourselves to God, we guard against the terrors of a temporal death here, and against the evils of eternal death hereafter.

I. What principally engages the minds and hearts of men, and inspires them with that love of the world, which St. John declares to be inconsistent with the love of God, and consequently with salvation, is, as the Apostle says, the concupiscence of

of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes. The first makes us slaves to our pleasures; the second fills us with strong desires of elevation and riches. The mutual influence and concurrence of these two different passions, never fail to make us quite terrestrial; unless they be carefully repressed and confined within the just bounds of moderation, by the principles of religion, whereof the consideration of death is undoubtedly the most effectual, for here we have the vanity of all the pursuits of life painted in the strongest colours; here we read, in the plainest characters, how great the folly is to place our affections in any thing perishable, so as to neglect the solid advantages of everlasting happiness. It is not necessary, I hope, to tell you, that you all must die: this is a truth which needs no proof or confirmation, as daily experience is sufficient to remove any doubt on the subject. Our great ancestors have lived, and they died. Generation after generation, like billows on the ocean, have successively followed them, and pointed out the way we are ourselves shortly to follow, unto the grave. The renowned men of old; the mighty conquerors of the world, who shook the earth by their power, the Alexanders and Cæsars, have sustained the stroke of death, because they could not avoid the blow, and passed away like the meanest of their subjects, forsaken by their power, their grandeur, their honours, their wealth, and their friends. O death, how bitter is thy approach to the worldly man and sinner! And the worldly man and sinner shall feel its blow; because St. Paul says, *it is decreed that every man shall die*: so that our whole life is no more, properly speaking, than one continued progression towards death. If death, then, be the infallible lot of all; if the time, the manner, the place, be all wrapt up in mystery; if it be the door that leads infallibly to happiness or misery; if it be the gate of eternity; it behoves you all, my brethren, to dwell frequently on the consideration of death, and to draw therefrom such
conclusions

conclusions as must necessarily tend to the reformation of your lives; as the Holy Ghost declares, *if you remember your last things you will never sin.* For this purpose, let us fancy ourselves for a few moments in one of those awful, silent places, which custom and religion have consecrated to the interment of the dead. Stop at the first grave; behold and examine the scene it exhibits to view. This undecorated clay-cold sod contains the remains of some humble peasant, who lately lived, as we do; whose ashes are now trodden under foot by the thoughtless passenger, as our's will shortly be. But behold yonder shrine, the costly monument of conjugal affection or filial piety. The strong and beautiful casements of that venerable pile were surely formed to remove horror from death, and corruption from human nature. Examine farther, and you behold double coffins, with gaudy trappings; but inside, stench, corruption, a little earth, and some bones. Should you inquire whose remains are those? if time has spared the monumental inscription, consult the stone, for he is forgotten by the world. And is this the end of all—the exalted and the humble, the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the king and the beggar? Is this the end of all the pleasures and joys of life? Yes, and of its sufferings. Is this the end of all the wealth and honours of life? Yes, and of its poverty and humiliations. In the grave all ranks meet, all enmities cease, all discontents are forgotten and buried. As we all came one way into the world, so we must all leave it one way, and that is death. Death, then, is that point which, during the existence of mortality, will always afford the most solid grounds of instruction: for what you have seen the grave exhibit in your view, your grave will, in turn, exhibit to the view and contemplation of future generations. This consideration alone should be sufficient to remove, or at least lessen, the excessive love we all bear ourselves; because this self-love, which be-
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comes inordinate by excess, is the usual source of most of our disorders and transgressions. Madam or Miss are of so tender a frame, so delicate a complexion, that coarse or ordinary modes of living don't agree with her; she can neither fast, nor abstain, nor practise any thing that may approach that abnegation and self-denial which Jesus Christ enjoined on all his followers. The 'Squire, with his cumbersome load of flesh, can neither put or keep himself in an humble posture, even in presence of the Lord: he thinks it a great deal, if, during our holy mysteries, he bends the knee at the Elevation alone; but afterwards he must either sit or stand, lest, by an exterior act of humility and reverential respect, he might incommode his unmortified corpulence. But why all this care and attention, this excessive delicacy and anxiety for ease? Do you consider that the body you are now so fond of, will, notwithstanding all your care and attention, shortly rot and moulder into dust? If this be true, and that it is all nature speaks aloud, is it not the height of folly, and a violation of every principle of reason, to gratify and indulge that body at the expence of your soul? However great this folly, still it is, by sad experience, seen, that a fatal propensity to indulge this heap of clay, which must shortly fall in pieces, is one of the most prevailing disorders among the Christians of our days. Consult the bills of mortality, and see how many daily meet death by the unlawful gratification of sense, by drunkenness, sensuality, and debauchery. Victims to those pleasures that draw death, with its horrors, in their train, many, alas! very many, have passed away. Take you warning by them. The horrors of death avoid, by avoiding the deceitful pleasures of life, and squaring your lives by a Christian life of mortification. For should pleasure even last for life, the life of man is short—a vapour that passeth quickly, as Job says—and when death comes, you will possess neither sentiment or capacity for pleasure: then,
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as David says, you will have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not; outward senses, but incapable of action. Death will put an end to all the objects that once proved so pleasing to your minds—amusing shews, harmonious concerts, nice and elegant entertainments, every source of pleasure, in a word, is to be exhausted and dried up in the grave. Why, then, will you sacrifice the inconceivable, everlasting joys of Heaven, which our good God has placed within your reach, for the empty gratification of sense, which perishes in the grave? Begin now, and resolve henceforth to subdue all the unlawful propensities of sense, as you value your salvation; because death approaches fast to you and to me, with sure and speedy steps; and when he comes, as you have seen, his first stroke will be to tear us away from all that is pleasing and comfortable in life; the next is to strip us of all the riches and wealth of this world.

What is meant by the concupiscence of the eyes as laid down by the Apostle, is that unsatisfied avarice which reigns so universally in the world; that strong and unbounded thirst after riches which seems to extend to all ranks, to animate and influence every individual. This avarice, or insatiable desire of riches, is *one of the fiery chains* mentioned by St. Jude, whereby numbers of souls are daily dragged down into the bottomless gulph of Hell. For *those who have a mind to become rich*, St. Paul says, *never fail to fall into the snares of the Devil*. How, then, shall we be able to govern and moderate this headstrong and dangerous impulse of our corrupt nature?—By reflecting seriously upon death; by considering, that all the wealth you have purchased with so much anxiety, seek for with so much pains, or that you daily labour for with so much sollicitude and care, will soon disappear, and leave you centered in the most deplorable indigence. Examine the situation of the most wealthy man the moment he dies: What becomes of all his opulence? his connections? his attendants?

attendants? his domains, lands, and possessions? Carested, looked up to, and obsequiously obeyed when living, when dead is forsaken by all.—Not surely by the wife, the husband, the child? By all, alas! forsaken, and loathed, and hurried off into the grave. This man of wealth, of lands and domains, possesses now no more than six feet of earth. The possessions lent him by the Lord, which he thought his own, are now passed into other hands, and the cold, comfortless coffin is his only possession. *His dwelling, holy Job says, is now the grave; his friends, corruption; his attendants, the worms; and his inheritance, a small, a very small portion of cold, uncomfortable clay.* O cruel death! is it thus you deprive us of all we possess? Is it thus you treat this honourable man, who, by amassing great wealth in the East or West Indies, in the remote regions of the earth, acquires rank and reposes under his fig-tree with luxurious ease? It is: for bend he must under the stroke of death, and forsake all the blooming fruits of his labours; because, *as he came naked into the world, so he has gone out of the world naked and destitute of all things,* St. Paul says. No, St. Paul, it is not so: his sins accompany him.—The sins he committed by too great an attachment to the riches of this world; the sins he committed by the unfair, dishonest, and fraudulent steps he took to procure or increase those riches; the sins he committed in defrauding the poor of the share they were entitled to in the riches he had acquired; all these sins have followed him from his death-bed to the judgment seat of God, and from the judgment-seat of God to the deep abyss of Hell. *The rich man died, says Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and the moment he died was buried in Hell. But Lazarus, who had lived in the greatest misery and want, was transported the moment he died into the bosom of Abraham: that is, into a place of eternal rest and felicity.* What, then, thou worldly and unsatisfied man, what art thou labouring for? For riches, which must shortly, perhaps

in a few minutes, pass away from your hands? For riches, which, in all appearance, will bring about your eternal ruin, as they did to Dives? *Fool that thou art*, says Christ our Lord, *to whom will those riches belong?* For whom art thou amassing? For a family? A decent provision is commendable; too much is censurable; anxiety is criminal. But where no family calls, where nature has but slender ties, how great the folly of all irregular attachment to the wealth and pomp of life! Because *this very night* (perhaps) *thou art to die*. This very night, perhaps, thou art to be brought to an account for thy soul, and still you dream, by day as well as by night, of nothing but riches, which death shall shortly strip you of. Was ever folly greater (and yet the folly is daily seen), than this anxiety, this desire, this attachment to riches? Henceforward begin—by disengaging your hearts from all inordinate attachment to, and by a Christian use of, the riches committed to your care—to *lay up treasures in Heaven*, as our Saviour desires you, which nothing shall deprive you of; *such treasures as no insect can corrode, no rust consume, nor any length of time reduce into dust*. What death will shortly do, without any merit to yourselves, do you now, what will produce an eternal weight of glory hereafter. Disengage your hearts from the riches of life. Make the proper use of them, first, by attending to domestic necessities, and, secondly, by attending to the necessities of the poor. Cover the naked, relieve the oppressed, cheer the heart-broken, give food to the hungry. Remove sorrow from the bed of woe by your timely visit, and gladden the dreary hamlet by seasonable aid. The young ones shall lift up their innocent hands to bless you; and the invocations of feeble infirmity shall pierce the Heavens, and draw down its choicest blessings on your heads. Disengage your hearts, I say, from any attachment to the riches of life; because they are not only perishable and of short continuance, but likewise because they
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are the usual sources of eternal perdition.— The day will come, when, what we are now considering in speculation will come to pass in reality. Unless the vengeance of God should seize you by a sudden death, the day will shortly come when you will be told, “ you would do well to settle your “ affairs, as the end of your life is approaching.” What awful sentiments will not then fill you at that dreadful hour! what grief and anxiety! how disturbed and agitated the soul! Then you will believe and feel what I now tell you, that you shall be for ever separated from every thing you held most valuable upon earth: husband, wife, family, friends, possessions; all, all must pass away like a dream. What support or consolation will the world or its riches afford the sinner on the approach of death? What reflections occupy the mind from past joys or future prospects? All the joys of life appear clearly to him what the Wiseſt of Men truly called them—*vanity of vanities*; and terror seizes him on looking towards the other life: for there he beholds an angry, a just, an inexorable God, prepared to take revenge for the multiplied sins of a long life; against him Heaven is closed, and Hell opens under him with its eternity of torments. Reason, then, as well as Religion, require of you to consider death now, as the sinner shall on his death-bed. By thus learning to die, you will disengage your hearts from all inordinate attachment to this perishable, deceitful world.— Then you will learn *to use this world*, as St. Paul styles it, *as if you used it not*, because you will plainly see that *this whole world is no more*, as the same Apostle says, *than a figure which passeth away*. Besides this great advantage arising from the consideration of death, another of no less consequence presents itself to our consideration, as thereby our thoughts are naturally bent upon heavenly things, as will be laid before you in the following part of this discourse.

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II. It is not enough to disengage our hearts and wean our affections from the pleasures and riches of this life, because philosophy alone may lead so far; as you see from history, where the sages of antiquity divested themselves of all they possessed, in order to deliver themselves from all the solitudes and cares of this world, and enjoy tranquillity and peace of mind: something more is requisite in a Christian: He is not only bound to make the possession of riches, which give him a command of the pleasures of this life, instrumental to his salvation, by denying himself of these and using those, as I have already spoken of; he is moreover bound to look on this world with indifference, as having no permanent dwelling therein, and to level all his endeavours at the kingdom of Heaven, being the place of his destination, the end of his mortal course, and consequently should be the only, at least the principal object of all his thoughts. The consideration of death most effectually inspires a resolution of this kind; because on death depends eternal happiness or misery. If we die well, our happiness is secured for ever; if we die ill, misery for ever follows. The moment we die, that moment we are brought to the tribunal of God, according to St. Paul—*after death, judgment*; and according to the sentence then pronounced our lot is decided for ever and ever. This awful sentence is what makes death so terrible to every thinking man. Not the loss of life, not the privation of the pleasures or riches of life, that shakes their souls and fills them with dreadful apprehensions.—No: were the stroke confined to these alone, thousands of persons would be resolute enough to look death sternly in the face, smile at its approach, and triumph in the agony. But what makes death terrible to the most resolute, is the consequence that immediately follows the decision of our fate during the immeasurable length of eternity. O eternity! whose boundaries nor man nor angel can calculate or comprehend; eternity! thou awful,
dreadful

dreadful sound; thou art united to death as the shadow to the substance. In this light should death be considered. But from a fatal insensibility we possess, few take the trouble of viewing death in the strong connection it has with our eternal happiness or misery. Do not most people look on it as heathens do, merely as the end of time, the last period of mortal life? But look you, my brethren, a little farther; stretch your thoughts and reflections one step beyond the grave, and seriously consider the situation of a man the moment he expires, with regard to eternity. The man of wealth and distinction is seized by a mortal distemper which baffles all aid, and death approaches fast. Occupied with the cares of wealth (for wealth engenders care), he had but little leisure to look towards the grave, or reflect when his ashes lay there where his immortal soul would lie. His disorder now grows violent.—Dissolution advances. The whole house in an uproar. Consternation in every countenance: a wife in tears; children in affliction; and the last moment of life expected by all with trouble and concern. The great debt of life at length is paid, and death has seized his prey. Amidst this shock of nature, what occurs to me, and should to every Christian mind, is to ask, with holy Job, *what is become of him after death?* Stretched and decorated lies the body before our eyes, but *where is the soul?* In Heaven? or—— Did he die in favour or disgrace with Heaven? A mystery; as such, concealed from human knowledge. Thou, O my God! thou alone knowest. The funeral pomp is prepared. Distinguished friends are called on to pay the last sad debt to the deceased. Crouds of people attend; and the bier is borne in silent solemnity to the grave. The ministers of Christ assemble to put up their supplications to Heaven, and implore Almighty God to look down upon him in his infinite mercy. Nothing, in short, is omitted that decency and religion prescribe. But *where is the soul all this time?* *Has he died in the*
arms

arms of his Redeemer, or under the empire of Satan? entitled to the joys of Heaven above, or the torments of Hell below? One thing is certain, that he was judged the moment he died, and his fate in consequence determined for eternal happiness or everlasting misery, so long as God is God.

What has happened to him under the justice of God, for you it is not necessary to know; but extremely necessary it is to reflect, that what has happened to him, with regard to the circumstance of death, and with regard to the uncertain, dreadful events that will immediately follow, must shortly come home to every one of you individually to undergo. You all must die, and the sentence of mercy or eternal reprobation will instantly follow. You know not, nor can you know, when this shall come to pass: whether soon or late; in a year, month, day, hour, or the next moment; at rest or in action; in health or sickness; in grace or sin. You know that die you must, and the moment after shall decide your lot for eternity. Eternity! what terrors encompass thee on every side! Every motive that can arise from religion or reason, loudly call on us now to prepare for that great, critical, and tremendous moment of death, since our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon. This preparation consists in leading a just, good, and christian life; because people generally die as they live: those that lead the life of sinners, commonly die the death of sinners; and those who lead a just and virtuous life, commonly die the death of the just and virtuous. The Spirit of God says so, in clear terms, in the book of Wisdom: *It shall be well with the man that fears God at the last hour; and he shall be blessed in his death.* Again: *Woe be unto you that have abandoned the law of God; when you die your inheritance shall be the greatest malediction.* I do admit that Almighty God may, and sometimes does, rescue the greatest sinners from the very claws of death, and puts them in possession of eternal happiness, in order to display the
inexhaustible

inexhaustible riches of his power and mercy: but these are extraordinary strokes of a most signal providence—miracles of grace, as divines say—which are not to be hoped for or depended on. As in the course of nature, the constant vicissitude of seasons, and the harmony of the component parts of matter, beautifully display the regular progression of consequence from cause; so, likewise, in the course of Divine Providence with regard to the salvation of man, is constantly and invariably seen a regular progression from a good life to a happy death: the good liver generally dying in the embraces of the Lord; the bad liver, on the other hand, under the empire of sin. If, therefore, you mean sincerely to finish your days in peace with God; if you value that reward which is prepared for you above, which certainly is valuable beyond comparison, beyond comprehension, you must spend your days in the service of God; and if you have led a wicked life hitherto—if drunkenness, or cursing, or lewdness, or robbery; if any of those crimes which disgrace human nature, raise doubts of forgiveness in your way, repel this attack of your infernal enemy; call upon Christ and Christ will hear you; call upon him with sorrow for your past sins, and the blood he spilt on Calvary shall blot them all out. But call immediately; this day, this hour; lest death may seize you. Return to the ways of virtue and godliness, which Jesus Christ hath pointed out as the only road to eternal happiness: whoever treads in any other, most certainly follows the path that leads to eternal perdition.

Although it is generally true that a good life is the sure forerunner of a happy death, yet it is adviseable to prepare for that death, by specifically appropriating certain seasons in the year—one day, for instance, in every month—to think seriously of our death, and put ourselves in the posture of mind we would willingly die and appear in before Almighty God. On such occasions should
you

you fancy yourselves stretched upon your death-bed, attended by your ghostly father, surrounded by your mourning friends, on the point of breathing your last and appearing before the Judge of the living and the dead. Ask yourselves then these important questions: "What now weighs heaviest on my conscience? Were I to die this moment, does my conscience suggest nothing capable of debarring me from Heaven and driving me to Hell? Could I appear with any safety before the dreadful God of terror, in the situation I am now in? Considering the principles I have adopted, the practices I have pursued, the friendships I have entertained, the societies I have frequented; considering, in a word, all the iniquity I have committed, it is plain no chance of life, but eternal death, must be my lot, were I now called off. The many doubts besides, which heretofore I have passed by, in the varied course of life, strike me now with dread. Circumvention, deception, extortion, and imposition have marked my dealings. The curied thirst of gain has induced me to buy a valuable consideration for half value, by taking advantage of my neighbour's distress. Strict justice has not been my leading principle. Where doubts occurred, I trampled on doubts. I stifled conscience on false principles, erroneous grounds. Will that now excuse me?" No, certainly: as all divines agree that an erroneous conscience, that is a conscience formed on erroneous principles (principles entertained and fomented by the passions), does not excuse from sin those who follow its directions. It follows, in cases like this, that every man should carefully examine whether at the hour of death he will not scruple any of those things. The most intelligent pastors of the Church, those whom God has appointed your instructors, should be consulted in all cases of doubt, whether these practices are sinful in themselves; whether they should not be scrupled, and not only scrupled,

but for ever laid aside. Did people act in this manner; did they once a month seriously reflect on death, as I have pointed out; did they clear up every doubt, examine every difficulty relating to their conduct; in a word, did they establish themselves in the principles and dispositions they would willingly die in, what a change in morals and conduct must necessarily ensue! How many oppressive bargains would be rescinded, necessary restitution made, exorbitant charges reduced and brought down to the standard of justice and equity! How many fraudulent and dishonest practices would be laid aside; erroneous and sinful principles changed and rectified! But because people seldom think on death until death comes, every arrangement of conscience is put off to the last hour: the recollection then of a long life of iniquity is such as to render it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to remove; wherefore they seldom fail to die as they lived—guilty transgressors of the law, in disgrace with God, and victims to his anger. The difficulty of clearing up, at the hour of death, the conscience of one who has lived twenty, thirty, forty years in the world, according to the maxims of the world, is great indeed. Then it frequently appears, that many injustices are to be repaired, many wrongs redressed, many malignant insinuations recalled, and many calumnies retracted, which before were scarce thought of. To a knowing and skilful clergyman, then it appears, that all his past confessions and communions were so many sacrileges; either for want of due preparation, sincere compunction, or an effectual resolution of amendment: for all sound divines agree, that where the habit of sin is continued, after many repeated confessions, there could be no real sorrow, no real purpose, no effectual resolution of amendment; and, by consequence, that every confession and communion became a horrid profanation of the body and blood of Christ. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to repair all this at the last hour.

hour. But how is it possible to do all this in a few moments, when the dying person is oppressed with the weight and malignity of his disorder, distracted by the sorrows of those who surround him, terrified at the approach of eternity, and driven almost to desperation from the consciousness of his guilt and the impending judgments of the Lord? Difficult, I acknowledge, it is; but the mighty hand of the Lord may and can accomplish it. The greatness of the difficulty clearly points out the necessity of preparing for death in the full possession of health and reason. Lead the life of true servants of Jesus Christ. Repair, by your future conduct, the scandals of your past life. Do now what you would wish to have done when death approaches. Life is short: I exhort you therefore most earnestly, in the words of Jesus Christ, *be always on the watch, because you know not the day or the hour*. Every morning reflect, that perhaps this day may be your last; that this day your death-sickness may attack you, or sudden death may seize you, or some disaster may befall you, when no longer time for repentance may be given. Regulate, therefore, every single action of your lives as if it were to be the last. Renew the same thoughts when night comes on; for remember, the long night of eternity is fast approaching; remember the morning is near at hand when you will not see the evening, or the evening will soon come when you will not see the morning. Almighty Father! of the morning and of the evening the Sovereign Creator; of all things, visible and invisible, the mighty Cause and great Upholder, graciously grant, that when death shall finish the period thou hast allotted unto each of us —when the term of our mortal existence shall close, the bright day of immortality and joy may open before us, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XV.

O N P R A Y E R.

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*In every prayer and supplication let your petitions be  
made known unto God.* Phil. c. 4, v. 6.

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OF all the duties of Christianity, none is so often or so strongly enforced as that of prayer. Jesus Christ recommended it in almost every one of his divine instructions, and composed a most sublime form of prayer to engage us to the practice thereof. The Apostles, following the footsteps of their Divine Master on this head, in all their writings to the primitive Christians, appear to have nothing more at heart than to enforce the practice of this duty. *Day and night let your prayers be continual*, say they; and in another place, *pray without intermission*. Nor were their endeavours useless; for we read in the Acts, *the faithful were persevering in prayer*. No sudden fits of fervour, like airy bubbles on water, which scarce appear when they disappear; no pharisaical or capricious piety, distinguished those Christians; but a constant, steady, discreet, and fervent piety, wherein they *persevered*, and whereby they attracted the veneration and respect of their very persecutors. Could we but see those happy days revive! Was the spirit of prayer once well established among us, we should shortly be delivered from those abominable vices which, as a torrent, overflow and disfigure the whole face of the Christian world. But, unhappily, scarce do we discover the least faint tracks of this holy exercise. The enemy of man, knowing well the power and fearing the

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the effects of prayer, contrives too successfully, by the pleasures of this world, and by its calamities also, to turn away the heart of man from prayer, and to occupy it wholly by shadows and trifles that pass away. The elevated, basking in ease, as if of their own making, forget by prayer to acknowledge the bountiful hand whence their ease arises, and a fatal blindness banishes from them the obligation of prayer. The great bulk of mankind, to whom calamity is familiar, neglect by prayer to soften their calamities, or to venerate and acknowledge the justice and wisdom of that Almighty Power who smarts only to soothe, who depresses only to exalt, who punishes but to glorify. The use of prayer by many has been totally laid aside. Some occasionally pray, but so indolent and careless, that no benefit to them arises from prayer. On the contrary, much mischief follows to those Half-christians, who, whilst they pretend with their lips to honour the Lord by prayer, the Lord spurns them: *I will vomit thee out of my mouth*, as he says in the Revelations; because they pray not from the heart, and because lukewarmness and voluntary distraction, if not indolence and inattention, accompany their prayers. Under circumstances like these, it is not to be admired that little benefit arises from the prayers of the most part of Christians. Why do I say benefit? Positive evil arises therefrom; because the practice of prayer, in the true spirit of Christianity, is all-powerful in effect; because the neglect of prayer, or, what is as bad, indolent prayer, is the fertile source of all evils: two propositions of abundant instruction. Of all evils, have I said that indolent or neglected prayer is a fertile source? Yes: but in considering this question I pass over the transitory and passing evils of this life, as unworthy notice in the consideration of the solid, substantial goods of eternity. To remove, if possible, such flagrant and pernicious abuses, and to re-establish the use of prayer, so ho-

nourable to God and beneficial to man, I shall propose to your consideration

First, the indispensable obligation of prayer; and,

Secondly, the manner of praying.

I. The great and indispensable obligation of prayer arises from two principles—the sovereignty of God and our own misery. Almighty God, at the same time that he is willing to supply our wants, cannot dispense with the submission due to him by all his creatures, and this submission is offered by prayer, which is not only a homage due unto God, but also a resource against our own weakness.

Independent of the lights of revelation and faith, the innate principles of the law of nature loudly proclaim the great pre-existing Power that made us; and every motive of creation and redemption demand the homage of adoration and praise so justly due to that great power. Now this homage is paid by prayer; and the obligation of prayer is enforced, not only by the law of nature, but by a special command, with a promise annexed to that command—*ask and you shall receive*: For if the Almighty had nothing in view but our relief alone, the institution of prayer would have been unnecessary; because his all-piercing eye can see, without any declaration on our parts, the weakness and corruption of our nature, the strength and fury of our enemies, the many dangers that surround us on every side, our wants and our necessities, which he is always ready to relieve, as he is infinitely good and infinitely bountiful. Nevertheless we see that he commanded prayer.—Why so? Undoubtedly for his own honour; as it contains a strong and public testimony of his supreme power and our own dependance; which are implied in the admonition of the Psalmist—*submit yourself to God, and that by prayer*. No supposition can be made wherein man is not dependent on God his maker, and obliged to acknowledge this dependance. This truth is supported by the example of Jesus Christ during

during the entire of his mortal life on earth:—Gethsemani, Mount Olivet, and other solitary wilds that abound in Palestine, have often been witnesses to the many hours, and days, and nights which the Saviour of the World passed in prayer in their dreary and silent shades, pouring forth acts of homage, of reverence and love to his Eternal Father. What motive could induce our blessed Saviour to act in this manner? It could be no want of relief, for *the plenitude of the Divinity that dwelt within him*, as St. Paul terms it, made him master of all the resources of Heaven. What then could have been his view?—Certainly to honour his Father, and shew us an example of the submission he requires at our hands. It is not possible for mortals to pay a more perfect worship unto the Deity, than by prayer. By prayer we should humble our souls and bodies to the very ground, and sink ourselves into a sort of self-annihilation in the presence of the Lord.—His greatness and goodness on the one hand, and our miseries on the other, demand this submission. The princes of the earth never appear more exalted than when their supplicant subjects implore their powerful protection. This is precisely the case in prayer. For in prayer we should not only humble our hearts, but raise our hands to the great Master of the World, and, like so many poor, distressed subjects, humbly solicit his relief. Nor is this submission confined to any one description of persons alone.—No: it extends to all ranks and conditions of life. The great and the small, the rich and the poor, the learned and the simple, the monarch on his throne, as well as his lowest subject, must all bend the knee before the Almighty Father of All, and honour his greatness by public acknowledgments of their dependence. By prayer we raise our thoughts to the throne of God; and from the contemplation of his blazing perfections, his power, wisdom, bounty, justice, and beauty, we begin to magnify his holy name, and invite the whole

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creation, with the Prophet Daniel, to join in celebrating his holy name: *all ye works of the Lord bless the Lord; praise and extol him for ever.* By prayer we silently recal the many and inestimable gifts of our God; and by the sense of love they raise and excite within us, repay them back to their author as much as is possible for a creature to do: *What shall I return to the Lord for all that he hath given unto me?* Prayer, therefore, necessarily implies the most perfect acts of religion, as adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; and since those acts of religion are an indispensable obligation upon man, it follows, as St. Thomas justly concludes, that prayer falls under the same obligation. Lest these motives should fail in making a proper impression on your minds, consider that prayer is not only a homage due unto God; but also a resource against our own weakness.

The external evils to which we are all subject in this life, from the allurements of flesh and blood, the false deceptions of the world and its passing glories, and the seductions of the Devil, as well as the internal evils to which our passions subject us, render an application for succour against their united attacks indispensable, and that succour is obtained by prayer. St. Paul assures us, that without the grace of God we cannot make one step towards Heaven, nor form one single thought for that end. How is this grace, so absolutely necessary for salvation, to be obtained?—By prayer: For Jesus Christ has told you, *ask and you shall receive.* As no one can be saved, according to St. Austin, without the grace of God, so no one can obtain this saving grace but by prayer. Prayer, therefore, is the resource which Almighty God has put into our hands for completing the great work of our salvation. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of Heaven, grounded on the merits of Jesus Christ, who hath made a solemn promise of obtaining for us whatever we should ask his Father
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in his name: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatever you ask my Father in my name shall be granted you.* The wonderful effects of prayer have appeared in every age. Patience to bear, constancy to persevere, and fortitude to resist all the enemies of your salvation, you shall obtain by prayer. By prayer how often did Moses appease the anger of God, and wrest from his hands the fiery arms of his vengeance. By prayer the Prophet Elias opened and shut the Heavens at his will; bringing down the fruitful rain to fertilize the earth, or producing sterility for want of it. By prayer Joshua levelled with the ground the strong walls of Jericho, and stopt the sun in his rapid course. The good thief on the cross, Mary Magdalen, and the publican, bear testimony to the power of prayer. The power of prayer is so incredibly great as to extend to all the emergencies of life. Other means of salvation, even the very sacraments, are limited to certain effects, and only produce particular advantages; but prayer has no bounds or limitation: it takes in every thing within its comprehensive reach---extraordinary aids and graces, as well as the usual assistances of Heaven. By prayer all blessings are obtained, even the great gift of final perseverance, which is undoubtedly the greatest blessing God can bestow. To comprehend clearly this tenet of your religion, you must know, that no one, though ever so just and good, can merit by his good works to persevere to the end; that is, to die in a moment of grace, whereby he has an undoubted title to the kingdom of Heaven. Of so great a value is this favour, that Almighty God was pleased to reserve it particularly to himself. But still divines agree, with St. Austin, that what we never could pretend to by the merits of our good works, may infallibly be obtained by prayer and supplication. And why I say so, is, because Jesus Christ having made no limitation to his promise, it must necessarily include the great gift of final perseverance. Hence you

see the necessity of prayer; not only from the constant aids necessary to support your weakness, and the admirable effects that may be derived therefrom, but also from the obligation of praying, to which we are all bound. This obligation is chiefly set off by the infinite debts we owe the infinite bounty of God---the debts of homage, praise, veneration, and love; and those debts cannot be paid but by prayer. Prayer is, besides, the channel wherein the blessings of Heaven constantly flow; and without prayer we can never obtain the necessary succours to bring us to life everlasting. From these considerations it plainly appears, that prayer should be our most constant as well as our most pleasing occupation. The hardened sinner, who by daily multiplying sins provokes the Lord to withhold his accustomed succours, has still one resource left open whereby he may draw down the mercies of the Lord, and that resource is prayer. The hardened sinner, St. Austin observes, has not sufficient strength to forsake his iniquities, rise above his passions, and fulfil those points of the law which require some difficulty, such as the sublime precept of the love of God; but he can pray, and by prayer obtain the power to do all this. If the just are bound to pray, in order to persevere in the ways of justice, how much more sinners, that they may depart from their evil ways? Are you subject to violent passions? Pray that the Lord may enable you to overrule them. If assailed by strong temptations, prayer shall overcome them. No difficulty, no evil can resist the power of prayer. And yet prayer, so powerful and universal in effect, and so indispensable a duty among Christians, appears totally neglected in those days, by vast numbers of people who pretend to be disciples of Christ, and expect to obtain life eternal, without labouring, or even calling for it by prayer, not only, I say, for whole days and nights, but for whole weeks and months. Soon as the merchant, the tradesman,
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the farmer awakes in the morning, business fills the head. The protecting hand of Heaven, that raised him from a species of death and called him to new life, is forgotten; and gratitude, then so peculiarly owing, is superseded by business. Business still growing with the growing day, neither the prayer of homage, nor the prayer of love, nor the prayer of request, are thought on; neither Heaven or Hell are thought on. To those men of business, life seems only given to make a fortune. The God that created them is forgotten; the God that protects, and still spares them in mercy, is forgotten; that God who heaps blessings and favours on them, which they foolishly imagine the effect of their own sagacity and industry, is forgotten.—In the mean time, this man of business forgets not at regular periods to go to regular meals; to eat when hungry, to drink when thirsty; and to look on himself as the provider of that meat and drink which the invisible hand of God alone provides. To business again this man of business proceeds from his meals, or to walks or diversions. But the day of retribution is at hand, when *he shall call on me and I will not hear him*. Thus life rolls on with the greater part of mankind, and the indispensable obligation of prayer is passed over. The various trifles of this world are pursued with such eagerness and fire by the thoughtless heart of man, that prayer, the source of all blessings, is forgotten. The business of this life seems to lay aside the affairs of the next; and a mortal blindness to your true interests, and a depravity in the ways of sin, seems, by a just judgment of the Almighty, to be a punishment for the abuse or the neglect of prayer. The uneasiness and solicitude which I feel, my dear brethren, for your salvation, would be entirely removed, if you laboured for the solid, substantial good things of the next life, as you do for the perishable, passing things of this life; if you devoted to prayer and other Christian works each day some reasonable time, which you unreasonably waste.

waste in something more criminal than your respective avocations. A weight of business, far from being a lawful excuse, is the strongest motive you can alledge for prayer. The more you are plunged in the cares and solitudes of life, the more you are exposed to fall and commit sin, consequently the more you stand in need of an extraordinary assistance from Heaven. Now this assistance cannot be obtained but by prayer. David, the illustrious king of Israel, found means to pray seven times a day, amidst the tumult of the most important affairs, the expeditions of war and the administration of justice: *Seven times a day have I prayed to thee, O Lord.* Cannot you, then, find time to pray every morning and every evening? What will those affairs avail you before the tribunal of God, which now occupy the head, engage the heart, and fill up your whole time? One good prayer will be of greater service to you than a whole life of tumult and noise. Not one of the great affairs of life can accompany you beyond the grave, but all-powerful prayer can obtain the grace of God and the glory of Heaven. Prayer, to obtain such blessings, must be accompanied by certain conditions, which I come now to treat of.

II. To pray is not sufficient, we must *pray in the Holy Ghost*, as St. Paul directs; that is, we must pray in the spirit of religion, or, in other words, with humility, attention, and confidence in the name and through the merits of Christ, which prepares the mind, regulates the object and the very form of prayer. Instead of these necessary conditions, our prayers are generally attended by three essential defects, as is beautifully laid down by the great St. Austin (who always casts a light before me on every subject I treat of): We pray, says he, either from an actual attachment to sin—"mali petimus;" or for things which have a close connection with sin—"mala petimus;" or in a manner which is sinful in itself—"male petimus." To render our prayers, therefore, effectual, we must

must take care to pray with an actual abhorrence to sin; to pray for such things as are proper to remove and preserve us from sin; to pray in such a manner as can admit of no sin: important considerations well deserving your most steady attention.

The first essential requisite for prayer, is, to prepare the soul, by an actual detestation of sin; because sin and the sinner being equally hateful to the God of all purity and sanctity, he can neither listen to nor grant the petitions of those who approach him covered with the filth of (I mean attachment to) their iniquities. The Royal Prophet says, *the Lord is far from the wicked, far from listening to or granting what they solicit. I will not hear your prayers,* says the Lord, *although you repeat them over and over, because your hands are full of rapine and blood.* If, therefore, you wish to derive benefit from prayer, be sure to observe that important rule laid down by all the great masters of a spiritual life, to begin prayer by detesting your sins---desiring at least to detest and forsake them---otherwise your prayers will most certainly be rejected. For in common reason can you suppose the Almighty will treat you as a friend whilst you profess yourself his enemy? or crown you with blessings whilst you offend him by your crimes? The secret cause of the ill success attending the prayers of the generality of Christians, arises from the careless and criminal commencement of prayer. It is not enough to bend the knee before the Universal Parent of All, in order to draw down his favours; you must first shew yourselves worthy, by renouncing sin, and then he whose bounty provides food for the beasts of the field, whose sun shines and whose rain falls equally on the sinner as the just; he, I say, shall not only stoop down to hear when you pray, but his providence shall overshadow and protect you. This preparation to prayer, by renouncing sin, scatters that *dark cloud* which, the Royal Prophet says, *obstructs the kind influence*

influence of Heaven. But whilst the attachment to sin remains, prayer, like foul vapours arising from a foul sink, cannot ascend to the pure presence of the Lord, unless to arm his vengeance. So sensible was holy David of this truth, that he always made it his first care to disengage his heart from all immoral affections, before he would presume to address the Lord in prayer. If you wish to pray with success, follow his example. Before you present yourselves at the throne of mercy, be sure to detest and renounce your sins in the sincerity of your hearts. Having thus formed the intention, or rather the commencement, the object of prayer next comes under consideration.

Prayer, in strictness of language, is but petition, and should be confined to such objects as are consistent with the dignity of God to grant and man to request. Jesus Christ has pointed out the great and chief object of prayer---*seek first the kingdom of Heaven*; because the goods or evils of this life, being passing and transitory, which he wisely dispenses among mortals merely as means to lead them towards Heaven; in his eternal mind those things that pass away with time, are not the great objects of prayer, but those spiritual blessings which emanate from and finally lead to himself. Possessing in himself the plenitude of happiness, which he desires to share with you for ever, vile and contemptible is every thing that leads not towards that plenitude of happiness. What the Almighty esteems, that he would have you esteem and sue for—his grace and his glory. But how blindly do we behave! We slight these heavenly objects, and thirst after stench and putrefaction, as the Scripture calls it. What we solicit with much fervour are a few worldly advantages, which possess no real good, and often cause our eternal ruin. Ask the ambitious man (if he prays at all) what he prays for with the most fervent desires? ---This post of honour, that post of fame; this dignity, that distinction; this employment, or that
reversion.

reversion. The extensive merchant or successful trader, how do they pray?---For safe voyages, good sales, hungry markets where their goods arrive, quick returns, and downfall to their competitors. This young and distinguished female, instead of protection from the powerful hand of God against the rude and pestilential blasts of life, prays to be noticed and applauded. The secret judgments of the Lord, if the affliction of sickness or indigence are insupportable, pain and poverty, call on the Lord for relief; and the prayer is lawful; but they call for relief from pain and poverty alone. With such low, terrestrial views as these, so unworthy a Christian, how is it possible our prayers should be heard, or that the Almighty could attend to supplications so unworthy of him? If Jesus Christ promised to make our prayers acceptable to his Father, that promise relates to such prayers only as should be offered up according to his will, and no others: for St. John declares, *if you ask any thing according to his will, he will give it to you*. Now let me ask, if praying as we generally do, for things quite contrary, or at least very dangerous to our salvation, be praying according to the will of Christ? No: To pray according to the will of Christ, is to pray for the remission of our sins and our improvement in virtue; to pray for the graces necessary to overcome our temptations, subdue our passions, mortify our appetites, discharge and fulfil every duty of a Christian to the very last moment of our lives. But is it never lawful to pray for temporal advantages?---For those that concern the immediate support of life, such as food and raiment, we may very lawfully request and expect them, as appears from the Lord's prayer---*give us this day our daily bread*: as for all other advantages, you should never call for them but on condition they be not prejudicial to the interests of your soul; and even then they should be the very last object of your care, and
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sued for without any solicitude or anxiety whatsoever. When you call for temporal blessings, says St. Austin, commit the whole issue unto the Lord, that he may grant or refuse them as he thinks proper. Say with that great Saint, "Are you not my father, O my God? what more shall I say, what more shall I desire? Are you not my father, O my God?" A short and submissive prayer of this kind contains more in a few words than the most prolix orations. Without seeming to request any thing, you in reality request every thing that a Christian should call for, namely, those things which his paternal providence sees necessary for your progress through life and also conducive to your eternal happiness hereafter. It is not enough that you prepare and regulate the object of prayer, it is, moreover, indispensable that you pray in a manner agreeable to God—with humility and attention, in the name and through the merits of Christ.

Humility is a necessary, indispensable attendant on prayer; and prayer necessarily inspires humility. A strong, impressive sense of our wants and unworthiness; of the many evils that surround such poor, miserable creatures as we are, in want of every real good, beset with dangers, unable to relieve ourselves or even to call for relief: is a strong motive to call forth that humility which should always accompany prayer. At prayer we present ourselves as supplicants before the Great Master of the Universe, who has it in his power to grant or refuse what we request; but he never refuses those who think themselves unworthy of what they demand, as the Holy Ghost assures us—*the prayers of the humble pierce the Heavens, and force away the consent of God.* The Cananean who forced the Lord Jesus to grant her petition, is a remarkable instance of this: She begs, she intreats, she solicits, but in vain, for our Saviour rejects her petition—it is not good to take away the bread from the children and throw it to the dogs. Hereupon the Cananean,

Cananean, humbling herself profoundly, and not dismayed by the repulse, replies, *I confess, Lord, the comparison is just; but still the vilest animals receive some scraps to feed upon from their master's table: let me, then, be treated in like manner.* All-eloquent, irresistible humility overcomes the Lord Jesus: he not only grants her request, but applauds her most highly—*O woman! thy faith is great; let thy will be fulfilled.* This is indeed praying in the true spirit of religion, and with a sure prospect of success. But is this the usual mode of praying among many of our modern Christians? Observe them entering the Church of God at the awful time of sacrifice: Do they assume the posture of supplicants? Do they pray even in appearance? Do they shew the necessary exterior marks of veneration, arising from hearts impressed with profound awe and homage for the great ETERNAL BEING present? No such thing: The eye seeks and the hand grapples some chair or easy seat, where, lounging lazily, they saunter away a long, tedious half hour, yawning, and stretching, and staring, but not striking their breasts with humility and calling on God to have mercy on them. Moses, that favourite friend of Heaven, that prodigy of perfection, the familiar friend of God, could never think of addressing the Divinity without trembling. *Although I am but dust and ashes,* says Abraham, *I will speak to my Lord.* And we, miserable sinners, full of faults and frailties, covered with crimes and weakness, oppressed with sin and guilt, very far indeed from the innocence of Moses or the holiness of Abraham, are yet so daring as to rush into the Almighty's presence unmindful of our miseries or the lowness of our condition. A Christian sensible of his duty and resolved to fulfil it, behaves otherwise: Before and at prayer his thoughts being occupied on his own unworthiness, his air is composed, his eyes dejected, and his soul penetrated with the reverence due to the Divinity he adores.

adores. This man prays as he should pray, with humility : he must also pray with attention.

Attention at prayer consists of three characters: the first, in attending to and repeating distinctly every word of the prayers you pronounce ; the second, which is more perfect by much, in considering and dwelling upon the meaning of every word, in order to extract and feed upon the spirit they contain ; the third, which is the most perfect of these characters, consists in uniting your hearts and affections to the various sentiments that occur in your prayers. These gradations may be adopted where human weakness is great. This method is not only easy in practice, but so excellent in its nature, that in a very short time it has grounded a great many most solidly in virtue. How many beautiful sentiments of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, contrition, and the love of God, abound in the Lord's Prayer, the Penitential Psalms, and the different offices of the Church, which are of little or no merit for want of the application of the mind and the fervency of the heart.

If a careless, indolent, and neglectful manner of praying be the reproach of many of those who are specially devoted to the service of the Almighty, how much more justly and forcibly does it not apply to multitudes of those who call themselves Catholics, and to many who are reckoned good Christians. The generality of Christians are deficient in that necessary attention which is essential to prayer, by suffering their fancies to run astray and dwell upon every image and whim of the mind. They seem at prayer to be taken up with the Lord, and treating about the most material concerns of their souls ; but in reality their thoughts are occupied either in their domestic affairs, the business they are about engaging in, the idle amusements of the foregoing, or the projected sports of the present day. Now, my brethren, can this be called praying ? is it not rather, as St. Bernard observes, an egregious affront upon the dignity of the
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the Lord, to pray him to give attention to your petitions, whilst you are neither attentive to him nor to yourselves? Without attention vain and unprofitable is prayer. Inattention incurs guilt. Should a slave, in the affairs of life, address his prince on some weighty affair, and, instead of following up his request by a steady and meek attention, should turn aside to amuse himself with toys and trifles, could it be supposed either that he was serious in his request, or that his prince could grant it after such marked contempt? Even so shall prayer with a rambling attention succeed. What follows, then? how are you to behave when you set about prayer?—Follow the directions of Jesus Christ: retire to some private place; shut up your mind and senses to all outward objects, (and when you do this you will be in retirement although in the midst of an assembly); then pour forth your souls in the presence of the Lord; and if at any time weakness should betray you into any involuntary distraction, take care, the moment you perceive it, to recal your wandering thoughts, and fix them on the holy exercise of prayer: then shall your prayers mount up before the throne of God, and be received by him in the odour of sweetness. Persevere also in prayer. The benefits arising from perseverance, may be seen by observing the common course of civil society. But Jesus Christ directs assiduity and perseverance in prayer, not only by his divine words, but by many examples in the holy Scriptures. Remember this, you who are praying this long time past, and, as you imagine, without any benefit; you who grow wearied by prayer if it extends beyond a few minutes; you who abandon prayer soon as the least temptation, the least distraction arises. “How is it possible to be constantly calling for a favour which is constantly refused?”—The great St. Austin answers the question: “You are mistaken; God refuses it not, he only defers it.”—Hold out a little longer: persevere,

persevere, apply, call out, and you will certainly obtain what you have been long praying for. If the Almighty should still persist in an absolute denial, you may rely, says St. Bernard, it is to grant you something better. In this case the denial becomes a blessing, because what you ardently wished for may not perhaps be expedient for your salvation. Salvation being the chief blessing that God can bestow, the great object of all our pursuits, the denial of any thing that should militate with it is a blessing indeed. Observe the Cananean of whom I have related: she cries aloud, but her cries are unnoticed: she redoubles her cries; the Apostles silence her: still persevering in her cries, she obtains the accomplishment of her desires:—follow her example. But should our good and merciful God refuse you, be assured it is to confer more distinguished favours. In order to increase the glory of St. Paul in Heaven, he refused (though earnestly intreated) to deliver him, by his power, from a violent temptation wherewith he was attacked: *my grace is sufficient for thee, Saul.* Have confidence, therefore, and persevere in prayer, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, which is the last, and perhaps the most essential, character of prayer. For please to remark, that prayer in its nature is not infallible; on the contrary, it necessarily implies a capacity of being rejected; otherwise it would not be prayer, but command. The power and force of prayer are founded on the merits of Jesus Christ, who, by praying for us on earth, has purchased the admission of our prayers into the royal presence of God in Heaven. Jesus Christ, in engaging his promise, exacted that our prayers should be addressed in his name: *Whatever you ask my Father IN MY NAME, shall be granted you.* Hence the Church of God always terminates her orations by that victorious name; and hence be you instructed to usher in all your prayers by that all-hallowed name, which carries with it irresistible force:

force : for the Almighty Father cannot hear that celestial name without recalling the innumerable merits of his son—that son whose requests he always made it his duty to comply with. There is no other method of imparting efficacy to our prayers : for though we invoke the saints in Heaven, it is only, as laid down by the Council of Trent, that they should engage Jesus Christ to intercede for us, in whom and through whom alone we have access to our heavenly Father.

In finishing let us take a brief view of what has been said. Prayer, you have seen, is of strict obligation, and praying continually a sublime virtue : first, because prayer is a homage we owe unto God, whereby we testify in the most perfect manner his sovereignty and our own dependence ; secondly, because prayer is the means that God has established for conveying his grace unto us, the sure method of receiving his choicest graces, and often the only method of receiving his most ordinary graces. You have seen, also, the necessary conditions of prayer, with regard to the dispositions of the heart—a desire of returning to God ; with regard to the object of prayer—those things only which lead unto God ; with regard to the manner of praying—humility, confidence, attention, and perseverance in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, which, like so many wings, should enliven and bear them up to Heaven. If you pray in this manner, says St. Austin, “ you have acquired the key of Heaven,” and all its treasures are at your disposal. The prayers you daily offer up will draw down upon you the choicest blessings. But if you neglect prayer, or pray neglectful, tremble, for desperate is your situation ; because, in the ordinary ways of Providence, your salvation is impracticable. To prevent this irreparable misfortune, pray as I have instructed you—pray daily, pray religiously—and you shall obtain the graces of conversion, of fulfilling all justice,

justice, of persevering to the end, and of partaking at length of that immortal crown of glory which is reserved for all the just and good in the kingdom of Heaven, and which, O thou Fountain of Love and Goodness! in thy mercy grant us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XVI.

ON THE LOVE WE OWE OUR
NEIGHBOUR.

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because
we love our brethren.*

1 John, c. 3, v. 13.

WHAT the Apostle means by passing from death to life, is passing from a state of sin to a state of grace; and the mark whereby we may discern this happy change—I don't say with any absolute certainty, but with that degree of probability and inward assurance which is sufficient to banish all servile fear, and administer peace and comfort to a virtuous mind;—the mark, I say, whereby we may discern this happy change, which procures this great and inestimable advantage, is, *because we love our brethren*: because we bury in oblivion the animosities, whether well or ill founded, which heretofore separated us from our neighbour, and, for the sake of Jesus Christ, associate ourselves to him in the bonds of charity: *Because we love our brethren.* For the same Apostle says, *whosoever is not just is not of God; nor is he that loveth not his brother.* It appears, therefore, my brethren, that unless you love your brethren, you can have no pretensions to justice, nor, consequently, any assurance or inward testimony of having *passed from death to life*—from the death of sin to the life of grace. If you love not your brethren, you are still under the empire of sin, and as yet buried in the shades of death: for the great Apostle St. John says, *Every one that hateth his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer hath life everlasting abiding in him.* Can any thing

thing be stronger than these expressions of the Apostle? Any thing clearer, at the same time more capable of alarming our fears and rousing us to a perfect knowledge and a punctual discharge of our duty in this particular? How comes it, my brethren, and yet the fact is so, that a duty so momentous as the love of our neighbour, which involves in its consequence an interest no less than our eternal salvation, should be so little understood by the generality of Christians? Some fritter it away, others contract its bounds, whilst others scarcely allow any obligation to exist. I have much ambition, then, to convince you of your obligation on this head, and the extent of your obligation. But your attention must necessarily accompany me, lest, by shutting your eyes to the light, you shut the door of salvation against yourselves; and I beseech you to apply with me for the light of the Holy Ghost, and the divine influence of his heavenly rays, on our hearts as well as understandings, that examining with simplicity his holy laws of brotherly love, they may lead us to that happy country where love alone reigns. In order to convince you of the obligation you lie under of loving your neighbour, I will,

First, lay before you the motives for that love; and,

Secondly, the nature of the love you are bound to shew him.

I. Among the many motives that should engage us to the love of our neighbour, two particularly claim your most serious consideration: the first arises from the supreme power of Almighty God; the second, from our own interest. God commands that we love our neighbour; it is our own interest to love him: two reflections capable of setting forth our duty on this head in the clearest light.

The law of nature has implanted in the heart of man the obligation he lies under of loving his neighbour; and in the Mosaic law this obligation was enforced by a particular precept—*Ye shall love the*
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the stranger as yourselves: but in the Law of Grace, our sovereign Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says, in the Gospel of St. Luke, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; and in St. John, *what I command you is, that you love each other*. The Apostles, in all their writings, insist frequently upon the same obligation; so that it cannot in the least be doubted but the love of our neighbour is an injunction of the Law. Not only a simple injunction, I say, but one of the chief and most material injunctions of the Law; for Jesus Christ declares it to be the second precept of the Law, in point of dignity: The first is, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and the second, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. When our blessed Saviour came upon earth, he found this virtue very little practised among mankind, even among his own people, the Jews; and to revive the practice of this virtue (originally engraved by the finger of God upon the heart of man, and afterwards enforced by the written Law of Moses), he ordered it by a special, solemn precept, as laid down in St. John: *I give you a new command---that you love each other, as I loved you*. A new command does Christ call what was written in the Law of Moses? Yes, a new command: for the charity of the faithful had grown so cold on this point, and the Jews had adhered so closely to the severities of the Mosaic Law—*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*—that brotherly or neighbourly love was scarce known in practice; and Jesus Christ, who *came down from Heaven to cast fire upon earth*, re-established the practice and observation of this heavenly virtue in a most particular manner, so as to make it the distinguishing mark of his religion; saying, *in this they shall know that you are my disciples---if you love each other*. It was also a new command in this, that Jesus Christ, by his own blessed example, had raised it to greater dignity than was annexed to it in the old dispensation. In this sense it may likewise be considered a new command, that if it

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had not existed in the old Law, Jesus Christ would have enacted it in the new: for the spirit of the Law of Christ is a spirit of love and mutual benevolence. The Old Law was a law of terror, *a heavy and intolerable yoke*, as St. Paul calls it; but the Christian Law is a law of meekness, charity, and goodness. Neither goodness nor charity can dwell where love is absent: it is the principle that enlivens our passage through the world, and smoothenes the rough ways of life. Jesus Christ, by way of eminence, calls it his own command: *this is my command, that you love each other*. What could he have said to recommend the practice of it more strong? My *command*, is as much as saying, the other commands you have received before from Moses and the Prophets, but I mean that you look upon this command of loving each other as my command, or a command coming immediately from me.

What shews the command of loving our neighbour to be of the greatest consequence, is, that it comprises most of the injunctions of the Law: for, as St. Paul observes, the most material obligations of the Law, such as, *thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery*, and the rest, are all comprehended in this one sentence, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The love of oneself is a principle natural to all mankind: it sets us upon avoiding evil and seeking good. The command directs us to do so by our neighbour. If we love our neighbour as Jesus Christ commands, we shall never do him the least injury; on the contrary, we shall never refuse doing him all the service that lies in our power, and as often as he stands in need of assistance. Our assistance, it is true, may become limited, from circumstance or situation; but the love we should bear our neighbour will always suggest the most benevolent sentiments. Hence it appears, that the love of our neighbour takes in every duty relating to mankind, and consequently must be a most material obligation—an obligation which

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which includes very nearly the whole substance of the Law. Reasoning upon this principle, St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans, *whoever loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law*; and again, *the plenitude of the Law is charity*. Not but the Law contains many injunctions besides, but because any man that has charity will certainly fulfil every duty relating to God and man, and, of course, fulfil the whole Law: for *the whole Law and the Prophets depend*, as our Saviour declares in the Gospel, *on the two great precepts of the love of God and the love of our neighbour*. Now the love of our neighbour is not only of the greatest consequence, but of the strictest obligation; so strict, that unless it is fulfilled there can be no hopes of life everlasting. To make this plain to you, my brethren, it is necessary to observe, that there is no attaining eternal happiness without loving God above all things. It is not possible to love God above all things, without loving your neighbour; as is laid down in the Gospel of St. John—*if any one will say, I love God, and in the mean time hate his brother, he is a liar*. For this command, he says again, *we have from God, that he that loveth God love also his brother*. So that you see it is impossible to love God without loving your neighbour: and it follows also, that if any man doth not love his neighbour, he doth not love Almighty God; nor, of course, can have any pretensions to the kingdom of Heaven. But if, on the other hand, we do love our neighbour, a strong presumption arises that we also love the Lord our God; as is suggested in the First Epistle of St. John—*if we love each other, God remaineth in us, and his charity is perfect in us*. The love of God and the love of our neighbour, Divines say, are like two links of one chain, which are inseparably united; or like lines which terminate in the same centre; or streams which flow from one and the same source. If the connexion, then, between the love of God and of our neighbour be so very intimate; if the one is essentially

united to the other, as the shadow is to the substance; if the motives that should engage us to the practice of this heavenly virtue (the power and command of God and our own eternal salvation) be so very great; let me ask, in what manner have you hitherto discharged this important obligation of brotherly love? Whence proceed those angers; this bitterness, those quarrels; that calumny, this slander; those broils, those law-suits? Is it from the love of your neighbour? from the love of God? Ah! my God, how languid appears your divine love in such transactions as these! how extinguished that celestial fire which animates your angels and forms the joy of the blessed! Notwithstanding the importance of this favourite command of our dear and most honoured Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ; notwithstanding that eternal joys or eternal sorrows depend upon the observance of it, yet few there are who seriously consider it. By much the greater part of us look upon ourselves as having little or no connexion with the rest of mankind. In our vain and mistaken notions, we fancy that our own private happiness is and should be our only care. But let them hear, and I beg the observation may never be forgotten by you, let them hear once in their lives, that God commands, and commands them under the severest terms, to extend their thoughts and their benevolence to the rest of mankind, and consider the whole race of man as one large and extensive family, every member of which, especially the poor, the forlorn, and the distressed, has an inviolable claim to the love and assistance of the whole. This is the spirit of that great and universal law of charity, which unites all mankind in the bonds of mutual love and benevolence; and is, likewise, the first motive for loving our neighbour: the second flows from our own interest.

Were we to consider things only in a temporal light, it is very easy to shew that nothing can be more profitable than the great law of universal charity:

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charity: For as man is formed for society, and liable, from the very frame of his constitution, to several wants and necessities, it is plain he must need the assistance of his brother man, in many occurrences of human life. How is this assistance procured? By the great law of universal charity: that law which obliges, under pains and woes of eternal duration, to assist our brethren in their wants, to direct them in their doubts, to comfort them in their afflictions, to serve and attend them in their infirmities. In fact, without this law man would not be man as formed by God, because the instinctive principle would be destroyed, which points out doing as we would be done by: man would become a species of brute, a tyrant to man. Is it not from the inobservation of this great and universal law, that all the miseries of mankind arise? Is it not the corrupted source of fell dissension, bitter animosity, black fraud, and cruel injustice? Did we all love our neighbour as the Law ordains, who could ever think of offending, much less hurting or destroying his brother? Did we love our neighbour, we would always give, always receive every mutual, every necessary aid. Did we love our neighbour as the Law appoints, man would then become a species of Divinity to man. Then the great would never abuse their power, nor the rich their opulence: envy and jealousy would depart from the world; and the cold limbs of feeble misery would arise at the beck of benevolence: wealth, like the sun, would never cease to diffuse its benign influence all around, even to the extremities of the creation: then, in fine, all mankind would live upon earth as in a terrestrial paradise—in union, in peace, in possession of the essential comforts of life; and death then would be as a door opened from a paradise here to the paradise of Heaven. O my brethren! have you ever considered the love of your neighbour in this sublime point of view? Have you followed up effectually this consideration by action?

N 3

No:

No: The law of charity is not observed; and, therefore, man becomes commonly the greatest enemy to man, in as much as he frequently proves the destruction of those whose welfare he should promote: more savage than the wild and savage beast, who never bends his rage against his own, but those of a different species.

Let us, however, remove all lesser considerations, and raise our thoughts to things of a more exalted nature—the spiritual blessings that attend the love of our neighbour; the first of which is the favour and friendship of God. St. John tells you, I mean the Holy Ghost tells you by his pen, that *if we love each other God remaineth in us, and his charity is perfect in us.* Now I beseech you to reflect, how great those blessings must be which necessarily wait upon a man whom the great Eternal God condescends to love; what effusions of grace must he not continually derive from the inexhaustible fountain of all grace and goodness? Amongst men, the truest friendship and sincerest affection remain often ineffectual, because it is not always in the power of men to do good to those they love; but with God it is quite otherwise: his goodness being always attended with omnipotent power, he cannot love without bestowing the blessings that ever flow from his love; because his power being equal to his goodness, the effects of the one must necessarily follow the other; and it follows, that the desire of doing good, which is the very nature of love, is the same with Almighty God as doing it in reality. Now what is it that makes man the object of the love of God, and consequently of his blessings?—the love of your neighbour, as the Holy Ghost told you before, in the words of St. John; and, therefore, the same Apostle exhorts us *to have, above all things, mutual charity for each other*; because *charity, or the love of our neighbour, covereth a multitude of sins.* Nothing can be more comfortable than this assurance of the Apostle, with regard to the wholesome consequences

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consequences of the love of our neighbour. Where is the man—(not on this earth)—but is conscious of having frequently offended the Divine Majesty, and of being greatly in debt to the justice of God? One of the most effectual modes of repairing those offences, and the many insults we have offered the Most High, in violating his laws, is by loving our neighbour; as is laid down in the Gospel of St. Mark—to love one's neighbour as himself is greater than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. I have dwelt considerably upon this subject, because it is one of the most essential points of our religion, because it is the second great command of the Law, because it is the new and favourite command of Jesus Christ, and because it is a command we all have so great an interest in, as our happiness, both in this world and in the next, materially depends on the observation thereof. Having informed you of the great and powerful motives that should engage you to the love of your neighbour, I did promise, and I now mean to perform that promise, to lay before you the essential characters of the love you are bound to shew your neighbour, to which I solicit your particular attention.

II. As the love of our neighbour is absolutely and indispensably requisite for the kingdom of God, it is a point of the first importance to know when and how to discharge this duty. For this purpose, it is necessary that the love we bear our neighbour be religious in principle, sincere and effectual in execution.

Religious in principle, means, that the love we shew our brethren doth arise from a motive of religion; either because they are made to the image and likeness of Almighty God, and capable, on that account, of knowing and loving him in this life, and of seeing and enjoying him in the next; or because they are our brethren in Christ, called to the same faith, destined to the same rewards, partakers of the same sacraments, blessed with the same graces; in a word, because they are living

members of the mystical body of Christ. This is what St. Paul sets forth when he says, *we are all one body in Christ, and each of us members one of another.* Loving our neighbour in this manner, is loving him without exception; and yet in this world it is not uncommon to see people profess and even shew the greatest regard and friendship for a certain set of acquaintances, who are distinguished by rank, or agreeable in society, or kind and benevolent in several occurrences of life: the rest of men are all excluded, many despised, others hated and abhorred. Is this loving your neighbour as God commands? By no means: it is loving as Pagans do, not as Christians should: For *if you only love those that do good unto you, what more do you do than the very Heathens themselves?* The second great precept of the Law obliges you to love mankind without exception—the Greek and the barbarian, the Jew and the Gentile, the unbeliever, the dissenter, and the infidel. You may, and should indeed, pity their errors and the darkness they are in, and pray that the Sun of Justice may enlighten their understandings and call them back to the ways of justice; but as for themselves, you are obliged to love them, to love them in Jesus Christ, according to the command—*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Far be, then, from any one to think, or to say, that it is lawful to hate, much less to injure, those that differ from any other in a religious principle.—No: the Church of Christ does, and always did, extend her charity to every society of men that inhabit the wide surface of the earth; as must appear plainly to every man who considers her conduct impartially. For let me ask, what other motive but the most pure and universal charity, could engage her to employ and to sacrifice thousands of her most generous sons, in the remotest regions of the earth, to procure the conversion and the eternal salvation of those that are born in infidelity, or that have deserted the ways of Heaven? The want of charity is always attended

attended with the utmost indifference: who is he that troubles himself in the least about those he neither loves nor regards? If, therefore, we see the Church of Christ daily exerting the most indefatigable zeal for people of all ranks and conditions, however different they may be in their religious worship, is it not evident it must proceed from the most warm and universal love?

If we loved our neighbour from a religious principle, we should never be induced, for his sake, to act any way inconsistent with the law of God. Many love their neighbours, but love them too much: for instance, a man in power, to favour a friend, will frequently transgress the strictest laws of equity and justice; a parent, from an excessive and mistaken fondness, will frequently overlook the misconduct of a child, which often is the cause of its eternal perdition; a faithful and generous friend, from a false notion of friendship, will frequently join an intimate acquaintance in the execution of the most unjust and unlawful designs. But this is not loving your neighbour in Christ and for Christ: this is loving according to the flesh, but not according to the spirit. *Walk, says St. Paul, in mutual love, as Jesus Christ hath loved us.* Now the chief object of the love of Christ for man, was his spiritual welfare and salvation; if, therefore, you mean to love your neighbour as Christ commands, you never will condescend to any thing contrary to the good of his soul: for a consent or condescension of this nature, would in reality be an expression of the most mortal hatred, as, under the appearance of friendship, it brings about his eternal damnation. In a word, if we loved our neighbour from a motive of religion, we would consider every man as a member of Christ, and, consequently, treat him with the sentiments he deserves in that character. This is the meaning of St. Paul, when he directs us to *prevent each other with mutual honour and respect.* For there is no creature, my brethren, that has the image of

Almighty God visibly impressed upon his soul, or is dignified with the name of Christ and ennobled with his grace, but is worthy, on that very account, of the highest veneration. But the misfortune is, that people seldom consider others but in the wrong light they are placed in by the mistaken principles of the world, which affix the notion of greatness and appropriate all respect to wealth and power alone. Hence it follows, even in the Christian world, that every man destitute of the advantages of fortune, is looked upon with cold indifference, if not silent contempt. But be pleased to consider, that the person thus looked upon is of the human kind, and, consequently, one of the most distinguished works of God; be pleased to consider, that he is a member of Christ, a child to God, and an heir to the kingdom of Heaven. Is he not redeemed by the most precious blood of Christ? Is he not the purchase of the death and sufferings of a God? Place him, then, in these shining lights, and then see if he be not worthy your attention, your esteem, love, and veneration. As Malachy observes: *if we all have but one and the same master, the Almighty God; if it be one and the same God that has created us all, and created us to his likeness and image; how comes it to pass, that any one shall disregard his brother?* If we loved our neighbour from a motive of religion, we certainly would bear with all the weaknesses and imperfections of every individual: for *true charity*, St. Paul says, *is patient and bountiful*. Instead of this Christian meekness which the Apostle recommends, what do you generally see in the world?—A world of airs, and follies, and selfishness; a world of unsubdued, inflammable tempers, ready to take fire at every trifle. “There is no bearing him!”—What is that so very disagreeable in your neighbour which you cannot bear? “His rigid temper, his severe ways, his austere aspect: every thing in him is in the highest degree shocking.” Take care that your vanity or self-love have not magnified his foibles, and

and raised mountains from mole-hills. Look into yourself, and there, perhaps, you will find greater imperfections by far than those which prove so offensive in the conduct of your neighbour. You cannot bear with your neighbour! Nevertheless you require your neighbour should bear with you. He is disagreeable! Are you less so yourselves? But admitting you are, and his foibles great as you represent them; is he not still a Christian? Is he not your brother in Christ? Is he not a person God commands you to love, whose failings, consequently, you ought to bear with? *Bear each other's burdens*, St. Paul says to the Galatians, *and so shall you fulfil the Law of Christ*. If, therefore, you do not bear with each other, you cannot be deemed to have fulfilled the Law.

It is not, however, enough, that the love we bear our neighbour be religious in its principle, it must likewise be sincere and effectual in the execution: for Jesus Christ says, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Nothing can be more sincere or effectual than the love we bear ourselves: it is discernible in every scene, in every action of life. Even when we do good to others, is it not generally our own private interest we seek? This inclination to self-interest is so strong, that it rules in every affection of the mind, and seems to be interwoven with our very nature; insomuch that it is ourselves in reality we love, at the very time that we mean to testify our love unto others. If, therefore, you purpose to fulfil the law of charity, you must love your neighbour sincerely and effectually as you love yourselves. You are not, however, to imagine, that this precept obliges you to love your neighbour as much as yourselves.—No: The terms of the Law do not imply an equality of love, as Divines observe, but a similitude or likeness of love. The great rule of charity whereby we are bound to the love of our neighbour, is laid down by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke, which directs,
that

that you do unto others as you would they did unto you.

Now as you could not in reason expect, that your neighbour gave you the preference, when the occasion offers, of procuring a considerable advantage; so neither can he expect, nor are you obliged to give him a preference upon a like occasion. The Law requires that you love him, not as much as yourself, but in the same manner or order in which you love yourself. To illustrate this point, which is really very nice, Divines observe, that the love we bear ourselves appears in two things—the sentiments of the heart and our outward actions. We not only wish ourselves well, but likewise procure ourselves every advantage of body and soul that we can: in order, therefore, to love our neighbour as ourselves, we must behave towards him in the same manner; that is, we are bound not only to wish him well, but likewise to procure him every advantage that lies in our power, and as often as he stands in need of the same. The great St. Augustin, expounding this passage, says, “We love our neighbours truly
“as ourselves, when we wish them the same ad-
“vantages we wish unto ourselves, and procure
“them the same advantages we would willingly
“procure ourselves.” Two things appear from this: 1st, that in consequence of the great law of mutual charity, we are obliged never to do any harm to our neighbour; and, 2d, to do him all the good, to render him every service in our power, as often as occasion requires, although he were our most mortal enemy. But among the blessings arising from the exercise of mutual charity among mankind, none is so distinguished, from its excellence and importance, as the love of God in this life, and the possession of his kingdom in the life to come: so you are bound, by the faithful discharge of this duty, to bend your chief endeavours to procure for your neighbour this grand, this unspeakable, this inestimable good. In virtue of this obligation, you are bound to sacrifice every
temporal

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temporal interest, even your very life, for your neighbour's salvation, when it depends thereon. Thus St. John says, in his First Epist. *by this we know the charity of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren.* Indeed the occasion of laying down your life for your brethren, seldom occurs, with regard to the bulk of mankind; but this frequently happens with regard to the pastors of the Church, and those that have the care of souls: as for the rest, they are bound in conscience to be inwardly disposed to do so, from a strong and well-founded assurance, that God will enable them to discharge their duty in this particular when the occasion offers.

I feel it a duty to go thus far in shewing you the extent, the elevation, and the perfection of the great law of mutual charity. But, unhappily! many there are who know not their duty on this head; many there are who, far from sacrificing the least temporal interest to the spiritual advantage of their neighbours, are the first to solicit, to seduce, and urge them on to the commission of the most sinful actions, in order either to gratify their passions, or to preserve a most insignificant interest. Unhappy men! how long will you be strangers to the love you owe your neighbour? You cannot love him whilst you are instrumental to his eternal perdition; you cannot love him whilst you refuse contributing to his eternal happiness. But why shall man sacrifice his interest to the spiritual good of his neighbour? Already have I told you: because God commands it; because your neighbour's salvation is of a higher nature, and vastly more estimable, than any temporal interest whatsoever. *My little children,* says St. John, *let us not love in word, nor with the tongue; but in deed and in truth.* Thus I require you this day, to love your brethren: Love them without exception, in Christ and for Christ; love them as
yourselves,

yourselves, sincerely and effectually. By loving thus, we shew our love for Almighty God, and Almighty God will shew his love for us: How?—by making us one day partakers of the great and inconceivable felicity he reserves in Heaven for those that love and serve him upon earth. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XVII.

ON THE PASSION.

Christus pro peccatis nostris mortuus est, justus pro injustis, ut nos offerret Deo.

Christ died for our sins—the just for the unjust—that he might offer us unto God. 1 Pet. c. 3, v. 18.

WAS it possible, my brethren, to express in more succinct and lively terms than the Apostle has done, the mournful subject that calls us all to the foot of the cross on this lamentable day? At once he lays before us the chief object of our attention—the sufferings of our Lord—*Christus pro peccatis nostris mortuus est*; the cause of his sufferings, our sins and iniquities—*justus pro injustis*; the object of his sufferings—our reconciliation with God—*ut nos offerret Deo*. Here is abundant matter to call forth reflection and fix our thoughts upon the present subject. On other occasions it may be necessary to awaken attention by pious artifices, but here the cause speaks loudly of itself. The profound and adorable scenes which the cross this day exhibits to our view, are most striking, as well in their nature as in all their circumstances. The humiliations of our Redeemer and the excess of his torments, the savage fury of his enemies, the mournful sentiments of the Universal Church, the awful silence and gloom that cover the sanctuary, the pious expectations of you, my friends, all tend to excite and prepare the soul for contemplating the tragedy which Calvary this day exhibits. Let us indulge this happy disposition,
and

and consider at leisure the most moving subject of our holy religion—the passion and death of Jesus Christ; but consider it in a plain and simple manner, attended with such reflections only as naturally arise from the subject and present themselves to the mind. Fairly and nakedly to lay this subject before you, is the surest way to expose it in an advantageous light: any additional ornament would only divert our thoughts from the consideration of an object wherein our dearest interests are involved. This is my design. But to reduce a vast, extended matter to some bounds, I look upon the death of Christ, after the Apostle St. Paul, as the sacrifice of all mankind. This, I dare say, is the strictest, as well as the highest, notion that can be formed of the Passion of our Redeemer.

First, then, we shall see this Heavenly Victim loaded with our sins;

Secondly, struck in punishment of our sins; and,

Thirdly, consumed in expiation of our sins.

Jesus Christ charges himself with our sins in the Garden of Olives; Jesus Christ atones for our sins in the different tribunals; Jesus Christ effaces our sins upon Mount Calvary. In the first place, we shall see our Saviour plunged into an ocean of sorrow; in the second place, sinking under the weight of the most cruel torments; in the third place, expiring upon a cross. Every where we shall find motives of love and gratitude for our Redeemer, of sorrow and confusion for our sins.

Venerable Cross! made illustrious by the adorable burden you bore, sink deep into our hearts, and touch them with the lively pangs our Saviour felt amidst your arms; make us commiserate his pains, and bewail our infidelities, the only source of all his anguish.

I. The fatal hour is come! that hour foretold by the prophets, when Hell in all its fury, the world in all its envy, co-operate to raise a tempest which rages uncontrouled against Jesus Christ: or to speak more clearly, with the prophet Isaias,
that

that hour when God the Father, in vindication of his honour blasted by the disobedience of man, is to discharge on his only begotten son all the punishments due to sin: *for the wickedness of my people I have struck him.* The injury the Almighty had received from the violation of his laws, is always present to his eternal mind, and calls out for a just and ample satisfaction: for nothing is more inconsistent with the wisdom and justice of a God, than to leave an action unpunished, which necessarily tends to his dishonour. But where shall this just, this ample satisfaction be found? All the reparations of man are limited in their nature, and, consequently, bear no proportion with an offence given to an unlimited, infinite Being. Where, then, shall this just, this ample satisfaction be found? Wherever I cast my eyes I perceive nothing but sin and misery. Among the numerous tribes that cover the whole face of the earth, not one but stands himself in need of a Redeemer. Man, therefore, is abandoned to his miserable fate, and doomed to mourn, with ever-flowing tears, his unchangeable condition. Such had been his misfortune in effect, were it not for the unspeakable charity of the Son of God, who in those desperate circumstances steps forth, as the Royal Prophet says, steps forth to act the part of a mediator: *Then have I said, behold I come.*

Imagine you are present in the Garden of Olives, which skirts Jerusalem; that garden which he often sanctified before by his presence in holy prayer; here Jesus Christ is pleased to begin the grand work of our salvation. Behold him prostrate on the ground, his thoughts full of his sacrifice. After a long, deep, important pause, he breaks forth into these words, Lo! I come, eternal Father, to appease your wrath, and satisfy for the transgressions of mankind: *then have I said, behold I come.* Immortal by nature, I have assumed a mortal body, to take upon me all the punishments of sin: my sufferings, increased by the immediate influence

influence of my Divinity, will repair all your glory, and make amends for the rebellion of man : *then have I said, behold I come.* What more can an injured God require, than the humiliations and sufferings of a suppliant God? No longer shall your altars smoke with the fruitless blood of animals : *holocausts for sin thou hast disliked* : behold here that long-expected victim, that mystical lamb, which is to take away the sins of the world : pour down upon me all your fury ; let my blood serve to quench your flaming wrath, and wash away the guilt of sin.

He finishes : the oblation is accepted. Jesus Christ, in the eyes of his Father, is no more, as St. Paul declares, than as an object of malediction ; a victim doomed to bear the iniquities of the world. In fact, from this moment, all the sins that ever were, or ever shall be ; the brutish dissolutenesses of lust, the wild havock of ambition, the inhuman projects of revenge, the cruel strokes of oppression, the excess of intemperance, the devastation of error, the scandal of impiety ; our blasphemies and imprecations, our frauds and injustices, our lies and dissensions ; thickened into a dark cloud, rush down at once upon him, and oppress him, as the Royal Prophet says, with their ponderous load. Observe, my brethren, how cruel was the task for our Saviour to undergo this first scene of his passion : a God essentially free from sin, necessarily averse to sin, to see himself beset, encompassed, charged with sin ! What cruelty greater, what severity harder ? Infinite Wisdom of my God, you alone can comprehend it ! Weak and guilty as we are, we discover only some faint glimmerings of the hideousness of sin. The blindness of our understanding, the corruption of our will, conceal all that is most shocking in it. The all-seeing eye of our Saviour seized at once the deformity of its nature and its opposition to the Divinity ; and still he takes upon him all its horrors. Yes ; the God of purity takes upon him all our obscenities ;

obscenities; the God of justice, all our iniquities; the God of sanctity, all our irreligion and impieties.

Jesus Christ not only takes upon him our sins, but our sins attended with the heaviest punishments. Here in the garden our Saviour foresaw all the humiliations he was to undergo, all the severities he was to endure; he foresaw the infidelity of his disciples, the animosity of the Jews, the cruelty of the executioners; he foresaw the cuffs, the stripes, the thorns, the lance, the gall, the vinegar, the cross: he foresaw all this, not successively and according to the different intervals of time and place, but in one comprehensive moment; in one frightful point he foresaw the whole of that chalice prepared for him by his Father, which, bitter as it is, in a few hours he is to drink off to the dregs. He foresaw, I say, the inflexible, the terrible rigour of his Father, during the long course of his sufferings, in exerting all the arms of his justice. Was it not enough, O my God! to let loose the malice of man? Among so many strokes inflicted by foreign hands, must our Saviour feel the sensible strokes of a Father? Is it thus you treat your only begotten Son? this Son, the bright effulgence of your divine nature? this Son, in whom you formerly placed your comfort and delight? What is become, O my God! of your ancient tenderness? That Heaven, which some days ago poured down its softest influence, and spread all its glories around our Saviour's head, is now, according to the expression of the Royal Prophet, turned into a Heaven of brass.— And you, most charitable Redeemer, with what eyes can you behold this ocean of woes? Alas! he sickens at the sight: a secret sense of his approaching sufferings fills his heart with trouble and anxiety: *He began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad.* This sadness, those sorrows, increasing continually, throw him at last into the utmost dejection. What will be the effect of this desolate situation?

situation? Jesus Christ can no longer bear it. Behold him rise from the ground and seek from his Apostles some relief to his sorrows: You, my friends, the early and constant companions of my toils, support my fainting spirits and console my grief, for *my soul is sorrowful, even unto death.* Happy, thrice happy men! to whom it is granted to be the comforters of your Saviour, your afflicted Lord and Master. Fly, quickly fly, to receive his sighs and groans, and pour forth before him all those melting expressions of love and compassion which breathe new life into a desolate soul. But what do I perceive? You remain unmoved: a deep slumber has bound your senses in rest: your Lord is upon the rack, and you compose yourselves to ease.—Shameful and untimely repose! how painful to the heart of Christ! Deprived of the slender satisfaction he sought for, our Saviour returns to his dreary spot of prayer, where he groans under the weight of swelling grief. His force is spent, his courage exhausted; he grows weak to such a degree, that he would most certainly expire, were it not that an angel flies from Heaven and revives his dying vigour: *Then appeared an Angel from Heaven comforting him.* How different is the situation of Jesus in the desert of Sinai and in the wilderness, from what it is in the garden! There he appeared in all the pomp and majesty of a God; if his angels throng around him, it is to serve him with all the obsequiousness due to the great Master of the universe: here he is sunk so low as to want the care and succour of those ministerial spirits. But what will not his love for man reduce him to?

After this celestial visit, Jesus Christ, it is true, recovers his accustomed strength. But will his condition be the more comfortable? No: new scenes of woe succeed each other; of woes more heavy by their perfect opposition. From this oppressive weakness, a new storm assails his heart, and awakens all his fears. The bitter chalice he

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is shortly to drink off to the last drop, is painted in his fancy in the brightest colours—the death of the cross! the cruel, ignominious death of the cross! There, there is what awakens all his apprehensions and sharpens all his fears. Whenever he views the dismal prospect, his blood chills within his veins. The God of all majesty debased by the vilest creatures; the Source of all power, all grandeur, subjected to contemptible slaves; the Author of life dying between two guilty robbers, with all the appearance of their guilt! What terrors must have hung upon that thought!—Jesus Christ himself is terrified. He trembles; he swoons; he falls again upon the ground: *He fell upon his face.* His fears now overpower his humanity; he perspires blood at every limb, at every pore; he falls and agonizes in convulsive pains: *Being in an agony.* I cannot explain, nor was it given to man to conceive, much less explain, how much our Saviour suffered from those struggles of nature. Some faint glimmerings let us merely catch from his words. Pressed by the immensity of those inward pains, more cruel than those outward pains that follow, he cries out to his Eternal Father, Thou seest this multitude of woes that surround me on every side. On thee depends the disposition of all things: avert this dreadful storm that is ready to burst upon my head.—*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me:* this bitter chalice of my passion; this chalice overflowing with complicated woes. Do you, my brethren, perceive all the energy and force of these expressions? That same Jesus who, a few moments before, longed for the approach of his passion—*with desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you*; that same Jesus who so often spoke with delight of his future passion; that same Jesus, I say, who shortly before so generously devoted himself to all the rigours of his passion; behold him now, through the excess of anguish, requesting, and requesting most earnestly, to be exempted from

from his passion, *let this chalice pass from me.* Eternal Father! whose paternal eye beholds, and who in mercy consoles the well-earned sufferings of sinful man, do thou hear the prayer of my Saviour. He calls, he invokes you to pass away the chalice. Hear thou and pass it away. It is a God that calls: your second self that requests.

But what have I said? O! let me recall these inconsiderate wishes. The affliction of our Saviour is excessive it is true, but necessary for our salvation. This he knows full well, and by all this reluctancy, intends no more than to shew his incomprehensible charity. For now his resolution and strength collect and rise above all the opposition of nature; and now with serenity he accepts that chalice, so frightful and so long refused: *not my will but thine, be done.* O Father! I reflect no longer on the severity of my destiny. By my blood man is to be redeemed, and restored to his forfeited happiness. In this view the cross smiles before me, and fills my soul with delight; *not my will, but thine be done.* Illustrious goodness and charity of our Saviour! to subject himself in this manner to all the rigours of the most cruel death. In the various incidents and trials of life, is it thus you behave, my friends? With the like religious submission do you receive all the crosses that providence daily lays before you? No: at the very name of affliction you tremble. You murmur at its approach, and once charged with the load, you drag it on with impatience, with fury and despair. Is this acting the part of a disciple of Christ? Is this taking up daily your cross, as you are directed in the Gospel, and treading in the steps of a crucified God? The scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ himself could not enter into the possession of his glory, but by many sufferings and tribulations: *it became necessary that Christ should suffer and thus to enter into the glory of God.* Do not you know, at least you should know, that you can never partake of this same glory, but by conforming with Jesus Christ

Christ the divine model of all the elect: *making yourselves conformable to the image of his son*. Your grievances each one says, are so great, they are intolerable. My brethren, can they be compared with the cross of our Redeemer? The effort he makes to receive it from his Father's hands, is so violent, that his blood, forcibly compressed within his veins, shoots out through every limb, and bedews the ground he is stretched on: *And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling upon the ground*. Come, now, and contemplate one moment, your Saviour and your God lying on the cold earth in this condition, without motion, without vigour, all covered with blood.

A God suffers and bleeds the very moment he takes our sins upon him.---How great an evil, then, must sin be, since it cannot be atoned for otherwise than by the sufferings of a God! Surely it must be that great evil mentioned by the Holy Ghost; that *grand evil*; an evil so far superior to all other evils upon earth, that they cannot even be compared: For those things generally counted evils---dishonour, pain, poverty, sickness, misery, destruction---are limited in their nature, and confined to man alone; but sin soars above all nature, and strikes at the very Divinity. This grand evil, mysterious and incomprehensible, becomes plain and intelligible by one view of Jesus in the Garden; and this sad view is more eloquent than all the expressions of men or angels. A God suffers the very moment he takes our sins upon him. --How great, then, must that aversion be which God bears unto sin, since he chooses to see his only begotten Son a victim to the severest torments, rather than leave sin unpunished! What punishments, what torments, then, have we just cause to fear, from the numerous sins we daily commit! If *the green and living stock*, which is Christ, is treated with so much severity, what will become of *the withered, useless branches*? Guilty as we all are,
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what mighty reasons, then, to apprehend the heaviest strokes of divine vengeance---all the effusions of the wrath of Heaven! A God suffers the very moment he takes our sins upon him---How great, then, should be our sorrow for those sins which made our Saviour suffer! Should it not equal the sorrow of the innocent Jesus, which is compared by the prophet to a great sea: *thy sorrow is like unto a vast, unbounded ocean*? Should we not cry out with David, *who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes that night and day I may bewail the wickedness of my sinful life*? Should we not protest with the penitent king of Israel, that henceforth our chief occupation shall be, in the bitterness of our hearts to ruminate over the multiplied crimes that stain our sinful days? Should not those crimes that press on Jesus in the garden, and cover him with blood, make us cry out with the famed Publican of the Gospel, I have sinned, O my God! but what sin is, I now only know from the sorrows of my Lord in the garden: look on me with eyes of mercy; behold him and *be propitious unto me a sinner*.

Far from entertaining these christian-like sentiments, we generally look upon the sufferings of Christ and our sins, the only cause of his sufferings, with the utmost indifference: a cold and languid indifference, bordering on obduracy. But if no feeling remains for our sins, or for our Jesus, suffering for them, come and deplore our want of feeling. A juster cause never claimed a tear. Insensibility for the sufferings of a God, who engages to atone for all our sins, approaches that hardness which leads directly to perdition. Your God suffers and bleeds the very moment he takes your sins upon him, with no other motive than to procure your eternal happiness. What return does such generous love deserve? Should a man shelter us at a considerable expence from some impending misfortune: should he save our lives at the expence of his own, words would be inadequate to express our gratitude. But still greater

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are the benefits which flow from our Saviour; who undertakes by the most cruel death of the cross, not only to deliver us from the burning flames of Hell, but to place us for ever in his heavenly mansions. Illustrious love of my God! illustrious charity! In silence let us admire it; and after a momentary pause, we shall behold Jesus Christ now charged with our sins in the garden of Gethsemani, atoning for them in the different tribunals.

II. As different sins had reigned and were to reign among men in after ages, so Jesus Christ in his passion subjects himself to different torments. Let us not undertake to enumerate them. The task were impracticable. We can only touch upon the most remarkable among them, which may be reduced to the infidelity of his disciples, the outrages of the Jews, and the cruelty of his executioners. Those are the heavy strokes that are to fall successively on this heavenly victim and prepare it for its approaching end.

What barbarous hand is to open the second scene of the passion of Christ? So odious a design is undoubtedly reserved for one of his most cruel enemies. No: the reproach of mankind, one honored with his friendship, entrusted with his secrets, admitted to a share in his functions, a friend, a confidant, an Apostle is the first to betray his heavenly master. Already the black design, the infernal scheme is concerted. See him at the head of a troop of soldiers, marching into the garden. Depravedly resolute, he approaches our Saviour and embraces him: this was the sign to make him known. Perfidious man! is it thus you behave towards your generous master? what fury burns within your breast? Declare what injuries you have received from his hands? On his side, I perceive nothing but love and friendship. Are these the wrongs that forced you to conspire his ruin? stop Judas, stop, and consider a while your odious project. 'Tis your God and your Saviour you are going to give up into the hands of his most

cruel enemies. See! what goodness shines in his countenance. Knowing your intention, he still calls you by the tender name of friend. Should not this tender word melt you into compassion? but your relentless heart is hardened in its iniquity. Who is there among you, but is filled, with me, with indignant anger at the recital of this fact? This anger is highly laudable I own; but should it not be turned entirely against ourselves? United to Jesus Christ by the firmest ties, and bound by the most solemn protestations of inviolable fidelity, how often have we betrayed his interest. Reflect a while and blush to see it.

From the shameful view of our own perfidies, let us return to Jesus Christ. Soon as the soldiers distinguish him, they rudely rush, and seize, and bind in chains and violently drag him along to the high priest, to be judged according to the formality of the laws. Most dear and honored friends of Christ, Apostles! ye highly honored, bosom friends of your Lord, who from being eye-witnesses of his public life, of his actions, miracles, instructions and benefits to mankind, can vindicate him from all calumnies, come and prove your fidelity to your dear Lord; come, quickly come, and vindicate his name. Your united testimonies will clear him from the false aspersions of his cruel foes. Appear quickly: alas! *his disciples leaving him all fled away.* All fled away! where is now that noble resolution, you Peter, and all the rest, some time ago expressed, when you protested you were ready to die in his defence? You now abandon him on the first view of danger. But I mistake: my feelings at the flight of ten of his Apostles, made me include all. One, more faithful than the rest, keeps our Saviour in view: *Peter followed him afar off, even into the court of the High Priest.* Surely his presence will be most agreeable to our Saviour and efface the memory of his companions' desertion. It were natural to think so, but the contrary will soon appear. Peter follows our Saviour, but he follows him

him only from afar. He loves Jesus Christ; but his love is not proof against any considerable danger. So weak a flame cannot long subsist: one moment and it expires. A maid servant comes, and looking on the Apostle, says; *thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying; I neither know nor understand what thou sayest.* Ah! Peter, Peter: was it to dishonor your Master in a more public manner, that you followed him hitherto? Could this wound be given to the sacred heart of Jesus, by none, but his companion on mount Thabor? Why did you not run down the stream, that hurried away your fellow-companions? Your apostacy then would have been concealed, and consequently less shameful to your master. This infidelity of Peter must have been the more afflicting to our Saviour, because on Peter he had founded his Church in preference to all the others, and specially distinguished him by a sight of his glorified body. This infidelity of Peter appears the more black, from the slightness of the cause that produced it: Only a servant maid, a woman armed neither with power, or weapon, or terror, asks a simple question, and behold, rank perfidy follows. Deliberately and systematically he answers again and again, I know him not: *then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man.* Heart of my Jesus speak your feelings by your looks: *and the Lord turning looked on Peter.*

What gloomy thoughts arise; what bitter remembrance is revived in the mind, on considering this infidelity of Peter! Our unhappy countrymen, our brethren and friends who daily deny and renounce their God, in renouncing their faith: that faith planted by Jesus Christ, transmitted from the Apostles by a regular succession of ministers unto us; and which same faith we proclaim unto you. But you should recall to your remembrance also the whole tenor of your lives; those lives composed of vice and error, whereby you often renounced your God in fact and reality, as blessed

Paul declares, *denying him by facts*, or deeds. So far, are we all upon a level with Peter. But shall we be like him for the remainder of our lives? The look of Jesus piercing his heart, *going out he wept bitterly*. This contrition so perfect in its origin, far from diminishing, encreased by time; for sacred history says, his venerable face was furrowed by the streams of tears that daily flowed from his eyes. As we followed and exceeded Peter by our crimes, let us follow him in bewailing them all the days of our lives. Let us lament and call for mercy to our merciful God, and he will forgive as he forgave Peter.

The sport of the Jewish rabble in the hall of the High Priest, our Saviour remained that whole night. What jibes, and taunts and scoffs, what indignities he endured that night, are only recorded in the chancery of Heaven. A glimpse only is handed to us. The rabble that night *mocked him; and struck him: and they blindfolded him, and smote his face, and blasphemed him*, and a thousand ways abused him. Next morning he is dragged to and arraigned before the Jewish Sanhedrim. Behold here the inversion of all order—the just summoned before the tribunal of injustice, innocence accused, and the sovereign judge of Heaven and Earth arraigned by prejudiced and guilty men. How looks this shew of justice, compared with that solemn Court which will be held when closing time shall put an end to the universe. There all nations of the earth shall stand before Jesus Christ to receive from his divine lips, the irrevocable decree of their eternal destiny. Here this same Jesus, divested of all his power and grandeur, bending under the weight of indignities and humiliations, appears like a felon before a mortal and corrupted judge. Equity and truth shall there preside; here falsehood and injustice bear the sway. There a beam of light shot from the radiant cross shall disclose before the whole world the guilt of reprov'd sinners: here the darkest plots are employed to overshadow the bright-
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est innocence. In the first step of their proceeding, witnesses are suborned to swear away our Saviour's life. Some accuse him of disturbing the people, and scattering every where the seeds of sedition. Others impeach him with a design of subverting the whole power of the government, and fixing himself upon the throne. Others in a word asperse him with impiety, for having said that in three days he would demolish the Temple and build it up again. Because Jesus Christ had preached throughout all Judea the words of life, now he is traduced as a public disturber: because Jesus Christ had declared the kingdom of Heaven was arrived, now he is traduced as an ambitious usurper: because Jesus Christ had foretold he would destroy and revive his body, the living temple of his soul, now he is traduced as an impious and sacrilegious man. In fine, nothing is left untried. The flat contradictions of their testimonies belie each other: but all this is overlooked by the malice of his enemies.

Are you not astonished, my brethren, to behold injustice carried so far? Far more astonishing is the conduct of our Saviour, amidst this heap of injustice. To those furious assaults of the Jews what does he oppose? what defence does he make? Incredible indeed! were it not recorded in the holy Scriptures—silence; and silence alone. Speak, sweet Jesus! speak: one word will shew your spotless virtue and the iniquity of your enemies. Expose their hatred, their calumnies, their contrivances, their incoherent accusations. Still is Jesus silent. This mysterious silence what doth it mean? Surely our Saviour intended thereby to teach us a great lesson of morality and reprove our over-warm sensibility, which makes us flame and blaze at the approach of an injury. If honour is attacked, or reputation blasted, or either tarnished, immediately we break out into murmurs, imprecations and bitter invectives. A God calumniated, reviled and abused, lays aside all vindication,

even murmur, that last sad relief of the forlorn and afflicted; and shall guilty man undertake to vindicate himself by the most violent and unlawful means? No: let envy and malice load me with the most infamous aspersions, my only resource shall be, where justice can't take place, to bear my wrongs in a religious and submissive silence. This is the great duty our Saviour points out whilst he stands silent amidst his accusers. On this great example let us often dwell; an example no less instructive to the Christian than astonishing to the Jews.

Justly astonished at this uncommon silence of our Saviour, they conjure him at length in the name of the living God to declare what he is: *If thou be the CHRIST tell us. And he said unto them; if I shall tell you, you will not believe me; and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go: but hereafter the son of man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God.* This meek and moderate answer, far from satisfying, only exasperates his enemies, for, *one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow on the face.* In days of yore when insult had been offered to one of the Prophets, a mere man, by one of the kings of Israel, the royal hand stretched out to offer this insult immediately withered. Assert thy own dignity, O Lord, and overwhelm thy enemies with one of those dreadful looks which unhinge the frame of conscious nature! Perish, at least, that sacrilegious hand! No: the God of power is all mildness and charity: *if I have spoken evil give testimony of the evil: but if well why strikest thou me?* Come now my angry, vindictive friends; come and learn from Jesus Christ how to bear, how to wipe off the stain of an affront. He is God, he is dishonored, insulted, affronted; he has the power, the right to revenge and still he revenges not. Learn wisdom now, my injured brethren, from this sublime example. Repress vindictive anger, banish resentment and never let it die in the ruin or in the blood

blood of your neighbour. Learn I say, for it is a God that instructs; and a God who is going to die for the love of you. Remember the stroke of enmity cannot reach your neighbour without passing first through the heart of Jesus: and will you add to his woes and sufferings? Leave so foul a deed to the unpitying Jews. As for you my brethren, assume more christian sentiments. Shew some feeling for the pains of Christ. Come and lay down generously at his feet all your wrongs and animosities. Offer them all as a holocaust of love for love. But should you still persist in your destructive projects, know then, you renounce all share in the merits of your redeemer: know the ruin you now meditate, the blood you now thirst for, will one day fall upon you in floods of calamities: know that this God who now requests, will then command; but command as the inexorable avenger of your inhumanity.

The cruelty of the Jews is not satisfied with insults. They aim at nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ. Already they pronounce him guilty: but as the Roman power had some time before extended its arms over the kingdom of Judea and like other kingdoms reduced it to a province, criminal jurisdiction was consequently removed from the Jews to the viceroyal governor, who then was Pontius Pilate. Before him they drag this victim of woe. Here they heap up accusations upon charges, and charges upon accusations. They are examined, weighed, witnesses heard, the actions of Jesus Christ examined with a microscope and no charge escapes a close enquiry. After all those pains, *Pilate said, I find no cause, no crime, in this man.* Justice at length takes place. The innocent is acquitted. Unbind him then from his disgraceful manacles, and let my Jesus enjoy sweet liberty and peace. Stop! infernal policy usurps the seat of justice, and Pilate to serve his worldly views will at once sacrifice the innocent and his innocence. During the trial, hearing that Jesus

had lived in Gallilee, immediately *he sent him away to Herod the Tetrarch or Governor of Gallilee, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days,* celebrating the passover. Base and criminal policy ! but the world abounds in it. Do we not daily behold Christians squaring their lives by the principles of Pilate ? To promote private interest they abandon, even trample on virtue and basely fawn upon an odious oppressor. Bound in duty to protect the good and punish the wicked, if their fortune or ambition demand it, they no longer distinguish between virtue and vice ; or distinguish them only to pass over the one and smile on the other, which should meet the severest frown. Abominable, infernal policy, how hateful to view ! And yet to this policy thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures have been sacrificed. To this infernal policy is Christ, already acquitted, again exposed to lose his life. Still dragged with ignominy by his enemies from post to pillar, from Pilate to Herod, let our pious reflections attend him also. The wonders reported of Jesus Christ throughout all Judea, raised a great desire in Herod of seeing a man so powerful in words and actions. Expecting to behold performed in their presence one of those miracles that filled the world with wonder, this prince and his court croud around this victim of sorrow. Sudden joy flashes in their countenances, to see the man so famous every where, and they prepare themselves for great delight and entertainment. Their rude and greedy looks search in his person for something extraordinary, and discover nothing but meekness and simplicity. Herod *questioned him in many words. But CHRIST answered him nothing—And Herod with his army set him at naught.* Construing the silence of our Lord into contempt, they despise him whom they expected to behold a wonder-working man. And they abused him, and *mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate.* Profane world ; how perverse are thy ways !
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The author of all truth is before you, and you cannot discern him; the author of all goodness and you revile him; the source of all grandeur and you insult him! Prophane world; to court your approbation what folly? for your approbation never rests but upon vice and vanity. To please you, my God! and to please you alone shall henceforward be the only spring of my ambition. Let the world ridicule me with jeers, and pursue me with bitter taunts; its taunts and jeers shall never influence me again to swerve from your service, because one glance of thy approbation is more than sufficient to repay all the malignant censures of the world. My suffering brethren, you who are become opprobrious by your unshaken and firm adherence to the religion of your forefathers, who by your fidelity to your God are cut off from the temporal blessings of a happy constitution; and made exiles in the land that gave you birth, could you expect, or could you even wish to be treated otherwise than our Saviour was by the impious court of Herod?

Revenge is now afloat and Jesus Christ is ordered back to the court of Pilate: immediately the mob assemble, and children flock around, not to rend the skies with Hosannas to the son of David, as they did last Sunday; but to screech, and howl, and lead in cruel triumph the lamb of God through the streets of Jerusalem. There every eye is fixed, every finger pointed, and every mouth vomiting invectives, reproaches or curses. General ridicule, public laughter or universal hatred pursue and follow him. And art thou, my God! become the contempt of man? The greatest delinquents when become publick spectacles, meet some pity even in the heart of an enemy: but here no pity, no feeling, no mercy. O God! what art thou reduced to? *I am a worm and not a man.* These were his complaints by the Royal Prophet; but these public confusions are only the opening scenes to his passion.

Already he appears a second time before Pilate; from whom he soon will hear his doom. This unworthy Magistrate had before betrayed his duty, in exposing the innocence of our Saviour to the event of an uncertain judgment. He will now betray it a second time, and seal his guilt in the blood of the innocent. His irresolute soul still fluctuates. The attested innocence of Christ; the divine placidity of his countenance; the wisdom and meekness of his words; the admonitions of his wife who forbade him to interfere in the cause of a man, whom she knew by mystic dreams to be something more than mortal; all these perplex and tease him with various doubts. The manifest injustice of condemning innocence stares him on one side; on the other the clamors of the mob frighten him. He would wish to save Christ without prejudice to his interest; but if interest interferes Christ must go. *What accusation bring you against this man?* Upon this question of Pilate, the brooding tumult among the rabble Jews bursts forth, and all becomes a ferment. To allay the ferment this temporising Judge devises new plans. Barabbas a notorious malefactor was in custody for sedition and murder. Old custom gave a right to the Jews, to release at Easter any one prisoner or criminal they chose. Now by ranking Jesus with Barabbas and proposing them together as criminals for a choice on whom the act of grace might rest, he supposed their fury would cool; and that pity would protect our Saviour: *whether will you of the two to be released unto you?* Humiliations of my God! when will you end? Unworthy man of honor, what could induce you so to dishonor my Saviour, as to rank him with a vile and infamous malefactor? What could be more injurious? Nothing, but the conduct of the Jews, who gave the preference to Barabbas. In the general uproar is there no one voice heard to console the heart of Jesus with a preference? No: *the whole multitude cried out, saying; away with this man and release unto us Barabbas.* Barabbas the

the murderer preferred to Jesus Christ! yes: the slave is preferred to the master, the creature to the creator, consummate guilt to perfect innocence. No longer are remembered the great blessings that overspread Judea by the preaching and the miracles of this man—God. No longer is sanctity a protection from criminality, or innocence from condemnation. Away with sanctity and innocence: away with morality and virtue: *away with this man*, and let robbery, high treason and murder be deified: *release unto us Barabbas*.

No doubt, my brethren, you feel with me great horror at this scene of our Saviour's passion. But the baseness and ingratitude which here mark the Jews are daily visible in our own conduct. As often as we prefer to the laws of God, to the maxims of the Gospel, our ambition, our interest, our vanities or pleasures; so often do we prefer Barabbas to Jesus Christ. The Jews, blind and precipitate in their fury, flattered themselves with pleading the cause of zeal and virtue against sedition and imposture; but we in violating the law of nature, written in the heart, as well as the law of grace, give a preference to Barabbas and reject our God with a full knowledge, a full conviction of his sanctity, grandeur, power and divinity; and of the right he has to reign over our minds and hearts. Our hearts and minds become degraded and dishonored, when subject to the empire, to the lawless domination of unruly passions.

Pilate now conceives and executes new plans. *I will chastise him*, the scripture says, *I will exhibit him a spectacle of horror, and let him go*. Accordingly these orders are given without limit or restriction, and without restriction or limit are they executed. From the tribunal to the court yard is our Saviour led: there stripped and bound to a pillar. A band of soldiers are furnished with whips grouted with knots, as used in military punishments. Their rage arms them with double strength,
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and they lay on the sacred body of Jesus. In the infliction of *chastisement*, the law certainly meant both restriction and moderation; but in the sufferings of our Saviour, moderation is a term without a meaning. All is excess: all is terrible. To the severity of the law, the executioners add their own inhumanity, inflamed by hatred. Every blow inflicts a wound. They lash and tear and mangle the body. His blood and flesh fly in quantities all around. The torn body, the piteous look, the meekness of our Saviour instead of pity create joy in those barbarous men. Their orders came unqualified, and vengeance shall drink deep in his blood, whereof every drop must fall through agony and torture. The sacred body of Christ is all over one wound. Having endured greater torment than ever came or will ever come to the lot of man to endure, he is loosened from the pillar: but, Lord God! what a spectacle of woe? He who gave Samson sinews to mow down his enemies like grass, to tear asunder like chaff the cords and fetters he was bound by, and made his strength superior to the lion, and to iron bars and massy bolts; this God of Samson is now lowly, and reduced to a spectacle of woe! To what mighty cause is owing this prostration of power, this abjection of innocence? To the inbred cruelty of the band of ruffians? No. To the profligacy of Pilate the Roman Governor? No; but to your sins my brethren, and to mine.

Jesus Christ at the pillar has suffered for all the carnal sins of mankind. The criminal indulgence of appetite, the lawless gratification of impure desire, of animal sensuality, the pride and pomp of dress, and all the evils that follow in their train, these are the rods that lash and tear his body: these are the sins which he beseeches you from the pillar to refrain from committing; for by every sin of the flesh we commit, so often do we raise the lash and strike the sacred body of Christ.

New



New scenes of woe now thicken before us. Horror multiplies on horror, and cruelty becomes refined by barbarous invention. His head, the seat of his blessed soul and of his divinity, must bleed. For this purpose a cluster of thorny briars are picked up, and platted and pressed around his temples. Every thorn plows its way and opens a fresh wound, and all dripping from head to foot in wounds and blood, *they put a scarlet cloak about him—and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: hail King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed and struck his head.*

As in the garden our Saviour called forth a miracle to support the agony which his love for man brought on him there, so in Pilate's court a second miracle became necessary to bear the tortures and the ignominy of those infernal agents. What new sin, my Saviour! have you left unexpiated at the pillar? To what mysterious cause is a crown of glory removed to make way for thy crown of thorns? Our abominable pride has platted and fixed this crown of thorns. That unsubdued pride which makes us rebel against divine and human laws: That pride which swells the ambitious mind, which stifles charity and makes us overleap all the laws of justice: This ill-grounded esteem for ourselves, which makes us reflect so wrongfully on our neighbour: those flights of a licentious fancy, which, very often at the foot of the altar, during the time of our most tremendous mysteries, are continually occupied in gay and airy, if not lascivious images. These are the thorns that plow their way into the temples of Christ: those are the disorders, which originating in the mind, our Saviour expiates in his sacred head. How far each of us have contributed to plant those thorns in the sacred head of our Lord, short reflection will shew. Our co-operation with the Jews is clearly seen by the malice of our sins. Our sins bound him to a stake: our sins were the thorns that opened a thousand wounds in his divine head.

Hitherto

Hitherto have his ignominies and his sufferings been confined chiefly to the rage of his executioners: but now he must become the public sport of the mob. To the derision of the mob, to their blasphemies and maledictions is he exhibited by Pontius Pilate, in all the doleful attire of degraded royalty. O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem! look up: *Behold I bring him forth unto you---Behold the man.* Is this that glorious deliverer foretold by the prophets; the desire of the Patriarchs, the expectation of nations? Is this that flower of the house of Juda, so beautiful to view, on which the Angels delight to behold? Is this that victorious monarch whose sceptre was to rule the remotest regions of the earth? Is this that immortal king whose empire was to extend beyond the narrow limits of time into the unbounded length of eternity? Can we now descry the least trace of his glory or his power? *Behold the man!* Behold how forlorn and oppressed by a mighty weight of woes. How are his glories effaced, his power eclipsed! My God, and my all! amidst this cloud of humiliations, my faith discovers all your native greatness. The shade our sins have cast around you, serves only in my view to reflect and heighten the splendor of the divinity: for what less than the immense charity of a God could bear up against such a load of calamities? Ah! could those sentiments be transfused into the hearts of your enemies! Already they eye him. Their relenting hearts may perhaps give way to compassion. Behold misguided Jews: *Behold the man* whom you pursue with so much fury. What have you now to fear from him? Is he not the most abject of men? *Sum vermis et non homo.* But what do I hear? Sudden cries vomited with vociferation, not by a partial few, but by the whole multitude, *let him be crucified: let him be crucified.* What! spill the blood of the innocent! crucify your redeemer and your God! Yes; the sentence is nevertheless signed. Great God! the victim is prepared. A mystic wreath binds its head. Already it has been charged with

with and wounded for our sins. It remains only to see it consumed in expiation of our sins; which you shall behold in the last scene of his passion.

III. Do not expect, my brethren, a distinct detail of the last sufferings of Christ. Every thing henceforth mixes in confusion. All the calamities imaginable are now to croud together and rush at once on our Saviour's head. The most exquisite torments, the most shocking blasphemies, the most outrageous insults shall succeed and renew each other by turns. The nature of the death of Christ, the very place of execution, the people who follow him, the soldiers that guard him, contribute equally to encrease his pain and consummate his sacrifice. Among the eastern nations no death was so infamous as the cross: on the cross is Jesus Christ to be nailed. No place about Jerusalem so public, so infected as Calvary: on Calvary is Jesus Christ to expire. The inscription over his head proclaims him a king it is true, but still offers nothing to the eyes of the world but an usurped, condemned degraded royalty. His numerous guards and the rabble croud encrease his infamy and multiply the number of his executioners. Behold him scrambling up the mountain sides with laborious steps. Upon his lacerated shoulders he bears his weighty cross. Overburthened with the load and destitute of strength, he falls or slips at every step. A situation so deplorable, capable of moving the most flinty heart, only exasperates his executioners; who regardless of his weakness or the difficulty of the up-hill ways, drive and goad him up the steep ascent, and before he dies, make him suffer a thousand deaths. The fatal summit is at length attained. Proceed now, cruel executioners, in pity now proceed. Glut your rage in the blood of the Lamb. Hasten: put this Jesus to death who came to purchase your eternal life. Extend his limbs upon the cross: nail those hands and feet which were always employed in pouring down the choicest blessings, or in tracing out the ways of Heaven

Heaven to the forlorn sons of men. Pierce this heart that always bore you the most generous love, that even now glows with fervid zeal for your eternal bliss. You have nothing to fear from his Omnipotence: the Heavens are now of brass. That power, on other occasions so dreadful, seems now suspended and bound up in sleep in the bosom of charity. Well has the prophet Isaias foretold, that he would be led like a sheep to slaughter: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows—He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins---and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.* This mysterious weakness became subservient to his grand designs. He has undertaken to redeem the world by loading himself with all our guilt: he then will suffer and not conquer: he chuses to die for the salvation of man, rather than live by his destruction. But lo! Jesus Christ is fastened to the cross, raised up into the air and exposed to the view of all Jerusalem.

The comprehension of man is too limited my brethren, to conceive the extent of what our Saviour suffered in this dolorous moment. In stripping off his garments his wounds re-open and bleed afresh. In piercing his hands and feet the nerves are annoyed and start into most painful convulsions. In erecting and pitching the cross, the whole frame of his sacred body is so violently shook, that the extremities are torn and split to pieces. If he reclines the head it bears upon thorns, which strike more deep into his flesh. If he endeavours to ease one limb, he increases the torment of another. His whole body, head, hands and feet are one, large, aking wound. O daughters of Jerusalem! *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.* Lam. Jer. *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Weep not for Christ; he desires you: but weep for and lament those sins which inflame the wrath of God and*
subject

subject you all to his terrible anger. Bid a final adieu this day to sin: When temptations arise hereafter, when evil suggestions prompt, remember Mount Calvary: remember, for it is a fundamental truth of our religion, delivered by the great St. Paul; remember, that by every mortal sin we renew the sufferings of our Lord, *again crucifying Jesus Christ*. When the evil spirit therefore, or his agents on Earth, or the depravity of your nature instigate to sin, recal at once the torments of your Saviour. When pride or malice or envy or ambition arise in the mind, remember the crown of thorns, and do not strike them into the head of your God, by consenting any ways to their suggestions. If custom heretofore, and bad company have formed your tongue to blaspheme or curse that adorable name, before whom the pillars of Heaven tremble: ah! forbear for the love of your God, and do not stretch up to his parching lips the sponge dipped in gall. Drunkards, come this day to the foot of the cross, and console the dying heart of Jesus by an holocaust of that passion. Break it down by temperance and industry, and Jesus Christ will die with joy in wiping away all your past sins. Come liars, detractors, calumniators, come and offer to your God the sacrifice of those sins *and great shall you be called in the kingdom of Heaven*. O you sensual, carnal men, who breathe only animal life; recal the dignity of your nature, burst asunder the cords that bind you up in sins, and no longer tear the sacred body of your Jesus by your crimes and wickedness. Do not join the Jews in their terrible imprecation, *his blood be upon us and upon our children*. But know, and let the reflection sink deep into your minds, you virtually join the Jews in this abominable imprecation, if you sinners, do not this day forsake your sinful ways, because by every sin you renew the passion of Christ. Let terror then seize you, if the love of God is dormant, whenever sin tempts. His uplifted arm that spared not Jesus, will it spare you?

Mount

Mount Calvery alone exhibits the dreadful evil of sin. The extreme agonies of our Saviour are augmented by the cruel insults, the bitter invectives, the outrageous blasphemies of the Jews. Some cry out; *vah! thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self*: Others; *if thou be the son of God come down from the cross*. Some again; *he saved others; himself he cannot save: if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him*: whilst others said; *he trusted in God; let him now deliver him*. Unhappy Jews! have you forgotten the Hosanna's wherewith you proclaimed him a few days ago the blessed messenger of Heaven? Has he not often proved his divinity in subjecting the seas, and the winds, and the fishes to his controul; in curing all manner of sickness, infirmity and pain; in expelling demons, raising the dead and forgiving sinners? And now you call for new proofs of his God-head. Perverse men, behold now new proofs: Behold that admirable patience which makes him bear in addition to his pains, those insulting reproaches, without even a sigh or a groan. Behold that warm zeal, which even on the cross, makes him still thirst for greater sufferings. Behold that animated charity, that fervent love for man, which prays and interposes even for his very executioners, *Father forgive them*. Above all, behold that victorious effort of omnipotence which shortly shall deprive the author of life, of life; and the world of its most illustrious ornament. O Father, Lord, Almighty God! look down now on thy son. Pale and damp his face appears: His closing eyes admit no more but shadows: His head droops: He moans: He dies!

The sun withdraws his light; the moon blushes; the Earth shakes; the veil of the temple is rent in two; the rocks split; the monuments burst asunder; the dead arise; all nature laments in silent, moving language the death of its great author. Amidst this universal confusion can the stony heart of man alone remain unmoved,

unmoved, and repose in peace amidst his sins? It was sin alone that brought Jesus Christ to Calvary, I mean your sins. They bound him, lashed him, abused him, crucified him, and will you bind him again, scourge him, abuse and crucify him by committing sin any more? Methinks I hear you all say no. If any should be unhappy enough not to join in that answer, I fear very much they are fallen into an obduracy, that knows no danger, that fears no punishment.

Jesus Christ, God blessed for ever, dies upon the cross: for what end? to procure our eternal salvation by atoning for our sins. Yes, my brethren, it was upon the cross our Saviour completed the grand work of our redemption. All his other sufferings were relative to this last action, and derived from thence all their merit. Upon the cross the anger of Heaven is appeased, hell subdued, and that sentence reversed which was pronounced in Heaven, as St. Paul declares, *against rebellious man*. No longer then let wild despair break forth in hideous shrieks. No longer are the gloomy shades of death terrible, since our Saviour by his death has opened the gates of heaven: *Lift up your gates ye Princes, and be ye lifted up O eternal gates; and the king of glory shall enter in*. Those immortal gates, shut for so many ages, are now open by the cross of Christ, for the admission of all the spotless, and all the penitent children of Adam. But notwithstanding the great blessings which his death draws on the world; notwithstanding the salutary, ail-saving streams which flow from his sacred wounds, how many souls redeemed by his blood will be lost, and lost for ever! For you and me has our Saviour died: for his greatest enemies this day has he extended his arms upon the cross. That venerable cross approach this day with reverence and love, with humility and sorrow for your past sins the true cause of all his sufferings. Pour forth your heart before him: tell him how great your sorrows are: tell him from this day forward

forward you never will offend him more. Invoke his mercy, his forgiveness, his blessing.

Behold the emblem of that adorable being stretched upon the cross. I do not exhibit this image or that wood for the purpose of your adoration. A charge so illiberal, so unfounded, so false, the Catholic Church revolts against. We adore nothing but God alone. His image we venerate out of respect to himself, and to raise by sensible representations more animated sentiments of piety. Behold then this venerable image. Pale and wan his lips appear: suffused his eyes; his royal head encircled with thorns; his side pierced, his hands and feet transfixed with nails. Why, O my God! why all these wounds? why those streams from every limb? My sins, alas! and yours. Our sins have been his executioners. He who was supreme in happiness, glorious and immortal by nature, came down from all his joys above, in order by dying for us on the cross to raise us up to Heaven. The immensity of his love for man strikes me from one view of his cross; the magnitude of that grand evil, sin, strikes me also; but my abominable ingratitude and wickedness in committing sin, and thereby crucifying my God, oppresses my soul in unutterable woe. If my abominable pride, O my God, my evil designs and wicked projects have wreathed your royal head with thorns; if my intemperance, sensuality and vanity have torn you at the pillar; if my drunkenness, lies, calumnies, slanders, curses and blasphemies have ministered unto you gall and vinegar; if my immoralities, prophanations, oppressions and criminal doings, have nailed you on the cross, receive those heart-felt sorrows I now feel, in union with your passion. Depart from me henceforth, O sin, and let thy holy grace aid me, my Saviour, for you know my weakness is excessive. I will from this moment die to my sins for the love of you who died on the cross for the love of me. I beseech thee by thy precious wounds to strengthen these our resolutions. Shed down the influence of those celestial gifts, which will support us

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us amidst the combats of this uncertain life. A sudden light beams in upon me : Methinks I hear the prophet say, *you shall draw waters in joy from the fountains of your Saviour.* Where?—In the kingdom of Heaven. *Amen, sweet Jesus.*

F I N I S.